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EDITORIAL

ALL QUIET AT SOUTHFORK

That loud noise you heard in Dallas was the sound of the other shoe dropping. Four years ago in Detroit, the Republican Party made its first tentative footstep toward a conservative counterrevolution. Now Republicans believe, or at least hope, that the Reagan first term is infinitely expandable, that there is still life in the Gipper and more life thereafter. As night settled over J.R.'s Southfork ranch the party militants set forth to shape American history into the next century.

The great political and social offensive launched by the upper echelons of the Western industrialized world at the end of the 1960s is still going strong. Reaganism is no anomaly. In Britain it has Thatcher's face; in Japan, Nakasone's. In Germany it looks like Kohl, and in Canada it may soon be embodied by Mulroney. One shudders to think what it will be called before long in France, where the reactionary right is surging with a virulence still unknown in the rest of the alliance.

A glance at the Republican platform, adopted without even a conversation on the floor, much less a debate, indicates what's in store: massive military outlays to achieve global pre-eminence; similarly massive cutbacks in social spending to lighten the tax load for the upper-income brackets; erosion of organized labor's role and function; more market magic to avoid government intervention on behalf of the unlucky; and more adventures in Central America (at least) to forestall possible contradictions to any of the above.

Can R.R. make this scenario work? If life were like *Dallas*, all the upcoming episodes would be in the can. In fact, there is time to stop Reaganism's progress, but it will take organization and effort, and a willingness to give the many victims on the field a place in the front ranks of the opposition.

WIMP = LIMP
Alexander Cockburn

PLASTIC DEATH IN BELFAST
Sally Belfrage

MEDIA LIB
Pat Aufderheide

LIKUD OR LABOR: THE ARAB VIEW
Milton Viorst

JOHN ASHBERY
Douglas Crase

AFTER THE APOCALYPSE
Maria Margaronis

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY

BIG LABOR IS HURTING—ITSELF

THOMAS FERGUSON AND JOEL ROGERS

Will Americans soon be asked to celebrate Labor Day without a labor movement? So it seems on Labor Day 1984. Trade unions are in worse shape than at any time since the New Deal. The unionized percentage of the work force is at its lowest level since 1940, and dropping fast. And even as it gambles on Walter Mondale's long-shot Presidential bid, organized labor seems on the verge of disappearing as a major force in national politics. For unions and their supporters, things could not be much worse than they are right now.

Some of labor's problems can be blamed on Ronald Reagan. Through recession and recovery alike, his economic policies have wreaked havoc on the lives of ordinary Americans, and his administration of the nation's basic labor law has gutted decades of protective legislation.

Back in 1980, candidate Reagan quite properly assailed the 7.1 percent unemployment rate as intolerable. Between January 1981 and December 1983, however, President Reagan presided over an unemployment rate averaging a staggering 8.9 percent. Even during the recovery year of 1983, the average duration of unemployment surged to a postwar high of twenty weeks, the percentage of the jobless receiving unemployment benefits fell to a record low of 28 percent in the second half of the year and some 24 million workers spent some time unemployed. And even as late as July, almost two years into the Reagan recovery, unemployment stood at 7.4 percent, with more than 8.5 million Americans looking for jobs that are not there.

(*Continued on Page 144*)

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LETTERS.

A WOMAN OF DISSENT

Reston, Va.

In "The Left, the Democrats & the Future," Andrew Kopkind and Alexander Cockburn lament that "this time out there is . . . not even a . . . Barry Commoner to raise a standard of dissent" [*The Nation*, July 21-28]. Are readers of *The Nation* to believe that Kopkind and Cockburn, and Sidney Lens in the same issue ["What Socialists Can Do in 1984"], are unaware that the Citizens Party again has a candidate "to raise a standard of dissent"? She is Sonia Johnson. Certainly the many radicals who supported Johnson's campaign through the spring deserve an explanation for the authors' unwillingness to educate themselves sufficiently or to mention Johnson by name (if ignorance was not the cause). And *Nation* readers deserve to know that even if those authors do not deem Johnson's candidacy noteworthy, at this moment in the campaign Johnson has received more support for her candidacy than any alternative party candidate in the Federal Election Commission's history, the first ever to win Federal matching funds for primary expenses. Kopkind and Cockburn's and Lens's silence vis-à-vis Johnson's candidacy is not unlike the establishment press's unwillingness to deal fairly with Jesse Jackson. Remember that Kopkind and Cockburn berated Michael Harrington and Irving Howe for discussing politics and the left "without one mention of the difficult name Jackson." Clearly, they must understand the effect of their own silence.

Many of Johnson's supporters were also Jackson supporters, backing Jackson to nudge the Democratic Party leftward but supporting Johnson so as to insure a voice for social justice and peace in the fall campaign. Indeed, Messrs. Kopkind and Cockburn, there are still "signs of life on the left side of the universe," which you may not "extinguish" (your words). The question, however, is, Will you recognize that a woman can hold high our standard?

Claire Goldberg Moses

HOLIER THAN THOU

San Francisco

Andrew Kopkind and Alexander Cockburn succeed in distorting the reality of the Democratic platform beyond recognition. The authors claim that the "white left" within the Democratic Party has "given up on . . . the Third World" and "can hardly remember the nuclear freeze." Fortunately, the authors' rhetoric bears no resemblance to reality. In fact, the platform has a very strong plank calling for a nuclear freeze and for an end to the war against Nicaragua. Perhaps such minor accomplishments don't impress our self-proclaimed guardians of leftist purity, but many of us worked long hours to give the American people an alternative to the Republican program of nuclear superiority and war in Central America. No, the platform is not perfect. It is weak on El Salvador and no first use, but compared with the Reagan program, it at least offers an opening for the forces of peace and justice. Working to defeat Reagan will do a lot more to help the defenders of Nicaragua and to avert a nuclear holocaust than all the holier-than-thou rhetoric from Kopkind and Cockburn. Wake up friends, this is 1984, not 1968.

Alex Forman
Co-Founder and Officer
San Francisco Nuclear Freeze Campaign

SECTARIAN FIDDLERS

New York City

In regard to the articles in *The Nation*'s convention issue, I ask: Where is your emotion? Where is your sense of history? Where is your all-out anti-Reaganism?

Detached, objective, intellectual and doctrinaire articles are inappropriate in the present political struggle.

I am sure that your intelligent, sophisticated readers are fully aware of the limitations of Mondale and the Democratic platform. But, today, there is only one issue: Reagan (no nuclear talks and the arms race) versus Mondale (negotiations and the arms build-down).

As I see it, the bomb must change our thinking in every area. Political analysis that was relevant in the 1930s is not relevant in the 1980s. This is no time to foster the cynical attitude of "a plague on both your houses."

The Nation must not play its sectarian fiddle while the world burns. Rather, we must all, without illusions, enthusiastically support the political faction that provides at least a glimmer of hope in a world facing annihilation.

Ben Matz

OLD BOYS' PRATTLE

Seattle

The Old Boys at *The Nation* had better wake up soon—before they lose so much support from women that they begin to feel like Republicans. What can be going on in Andrew Kopkind and Alexander Cockburn's pretty little heads to make them think feminists could support Jesse Jackson, whose commitment to women is about as convincing as his commitment to Jews? And what a silly, harebrained notion, crediting Jackson with Lloyd Doggett's Senate candidacy in Texas. If Jackson had his way, there wouldn't be any primary runoffs in the South, and Doggett would not have survived the primary.

I know all this political stuff is pretty hard for men to figure out, and we women are a patient, forbearing breed. Still, the unremitting masculine prattle is getting to be a bit much. I'll bet if you were to ask nicely, you would find some women willing to write about the Presidential election once in a while.

Margot Sims

KEEP IT UP

Berkeley, Calif.

Thank you for the piece by Andrew Kopkind and Alexander Cockburn. It is the best discussion I've read of the sad state of the Democratic Party from the perspective of the democratic left. However, as helpful as the Kopkind-Cockburn analysis is, I doubt I can bring myself to vote for Mondale.

Incidentally, *The Nation* reads better these last months, maybe these last couple of years, than it has for a long, long time. Keep it up.

Roger Montgomery

KOPKIND AND COCKBURN REPLY

New York City

Moses's enthusiasm for Sonia Johnson's candidacy is understandable; the Citizens Party has reached people who would not otherwise have been moved to participate in politics this year. But Johnson has not been able to consolidate an important left or liberal constituency as Barry Commoner did, to a degree, last time out. And, in fact, the Citizens Party needlessly confiscated energies from the very campaign—Jackson's—that most amply realized the rationale for that party's existence.

Alex Forman reasonably prefers to stress the differences between Mondale and Reagan, and to state the necessity of voting for the former. We agree. But he should not ignore the similarities. Mondale calls for continued real increases in defense spending, refuses to make a no-first-use pledge, defends American adventurism abroad (Grenada, for instance), and has no qualms about Red-baiting when it suits him. The liberals and leftists who support Mondale are drawn willy-nilly into his cold war pathology.

Margot Sims has a point about the Texas Senatorial primary and Jackson's position on runoffs. But reporters in that state were convinced that the Rainbow was vital to Doggett's victory.

Andrew Kopkind and
Alexander Cockburn

RESEARCHER'S QUERY

Cleveland

For a dissertation on the S.D.S. Economic Research and Action Project in the mid-1960s, I would like to hear from people involved in the ERAP effort, especially the Cleveland project. More than recounting what happened in ERAP, I want to examine what impact community organizing had on the lives and ideas of the organizers themselves and to evaluate what contribution ERAP made in the development of the American left. Please write me in care of the American Studies Program, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio 44106.

Ken Rose

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EDITORIALS.

Ferraroblip

For two weeks the matter of Geraldine Ferraro's finances was a flap waiting to be a gate. In the end, it may be nothing more than a blip. The headlines were heated and the reportage became raucous as the media targeted yet another victim, following the disappearance of Jesse Jackson from the political center stage. But Ferraro, like Jackson, refused to wither under the fire. Things have indeed changed in American politics: blacks and women are fighting for power, and fighting back when they are challenged. Ferraro's televised press conference at Kennedy International Airport may not have been comparable to Richard Nixon's "Checkers" speech in corn-ball demagogy, but in the few days after she answered reporters' tough charges, it appeared that she had countered the adverse political fallout of their assaults at least as effectively as the Republican Vice-Presidential candidate did three decades ago.

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The questions that were raised during Ferraro Flap may never be completely resolved, and the House Ethics Committee may ultimately find that Ferraro erred in claiming an exemption from the rules requiring disclosure of her husband's sources of income. But there's already enough in the record for tax lawyers to argue about for years to come, and investigative reporters will never plumb the depths of New York City's real estate deals, as murky a mess as can be found anywhere in the American marketplace. Ferraro and Zaccaro may have acted within the letter and the spirit of the pertinent laws, but they are waist-deep in a particularly sleazy sector of a generally distasteful business.

But although the material of the affair has been deals, loans and taxes, the nature of the attack on Ferraro herself was always political. It cannot possibly matter whether Ferraro checked the right boxes on her disclosure form, or commingled her husband's bank account with her own to pay for a vacation or their children's school tuition. (And no one has come up with any evidence that she is a puppet of the real estate lobby; quite the contrary, she received an 88 percent disapproval rating from the realtors.) In the same way, it didn't matter much what Jesse Jackson said in his unguarded moments. Neither attack had anything to do with policy, governance or even, in the last analysis, character. Jackson proved his sensitivity and integrity beyond his critics' suspicions. Ferraro's common sense and confident reasonableness will likely have the same effect.

Ferraro was charged by the press (and by a conservative legal foundation) not with what she had allegedly done but for what she is: a phenomenon that threatens the conventions of American politics. In a curious way, the same constellation of historical forces that got her where she is also got her into trouble. She owes her candidacy to the women's movement—not, perhaps, to organized feminism or to any single ideological drive of the last many years but rather to the radical expansion of possible roles for women in America. She buys and sells real estate, raises money, keeps separate accounts—and gets elected to public office. But the larger society still holds to standards and maintains laws that do not recognize women as equal partners in the business world or independent political actors—"I can give you a speech about how hard it is for women to raise money to run for office," Ferraro told reporters. If John Zaccaro ran for office, with a wife safely at home and a business all to himself, it would be hard to put together the scandal that has been inflicted unfairly on Geraldine Ferraro.

Lawrence Story

Lawrence, Massachusetts

The rioting in the Lower Tower Hill section of this city which sent two dozen people to the hospital on August 8 and 9 was "an isolated incident over nothing," public safety director Raymond Johnson declared. "It was not racial." Mayor John Buckley said, "We've learned to live together. . . . I don't think there's been a history of tension."

Presumably irrelevant was the crowd of whites who chanted "U.S.A.! U.S.A.!" as they marched on Hispanics; the young white resident who, with a conspiratorial wink, urged me to "watch out for guys with tans"; the white businessman who told Colin Campbell of *The New York Times*, "This used to be a good city, but you get all these Spanish people in here and 90 percent of them don't work." Another white man spoke of "sandblasting" the Hispanics "just like graffiti"; another assured me, "They're all a bunch of heroin addicts." A racial incident? Perish the thought.

The whites in this area, chiefly of French-Canadian descent, consistently refused to give their names to reporters. The Hispanics—Puerto Ricans, Dominicans and Cubans—were happy to go on the record with their comments.

"Every night they throw a bottle at me," Fernando Curc told reporters. "They keep doing that, we're going to defend ourselves."

"We can't even go in the store because we're Spanish," said Maria Tirado.

"Tell them to give us jobs—then there won't be time to fight," said Alex Cruz.

"The cops pushed my brother off his bike last night just 'cause he's a Puerto Rican," said Michelle Pertz.

The only anonymous statement from a Hispanic was a hand-lettered sign stuck up on one of the triple-decker houses near the projects: "STOP TREATING US AS SECOND-CLASS CITIZENS."

Lawrence, a former mill town, a depressing shell of a city thirty miles north of Boston, has one of the highest unemployment rates in Massachusetts and a poverty level twice the statewide average. Yet Hispanics, who constitute between 35 and 40 percent of the population of 63,000, make the rest of the residents seem well-off by comparison. Their mean household income is about $10,000, 40 percent below the city's average. Nearly 60 percent of them live in "abject poverty," according to Alex Rodriguez, chairman of the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination.

As for representation in city government, it's no wonder the Justice Department's community relations service has considered Lawrence a potential racial trouble spot for several years. There has never been a Hispanic on the City Council or school committee. Of 850 city employees, thirteen are Hispanic. One Hispanic on the 110-person police force is leaving; the other one remains.

The riot broke out on Oxford Street, which is in a mixed neighborhood, after someone tossed a rock into a third-story bedroom where a Hispanic baby was sleeping. An exchange of Molotov cocktails, baseball bats, rocks and flaming barrels followed. (Residents are convinced that the second night would have been quiet were it not for the TV camera crews, who transformed street fighters into celebrities. As it was, thirteen people were shot, stabbed or stoned that night.) City officials beefed up security and imposed an 8 P.M. to 6 A.M. curfew for three consecutive nights.

A diverse assortment of people promptly headed for the area. Tourists with sunglasses and cameras came to gawk at

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the charred remains of a house. Bob Rivera, 30, of Brooklyn, came to protect his relatives. "It's our blood," he explained. Members of the Revolutionary Communist Party came to distribute literature and tell residents, "As long as poor people fight against each other, everybody loses." (On August 13, they were arrested for inciting to riot.) Boston's Archbishop, Bernard Law, came to celebrate a mass, during which he asked various ethnic groups to stand, one at a time, and be applauded by the rest of the congregation. Then he pronounced the city "resurrected."

A more down-to-earth observer would argue that Lawrence is still waiting for a miracle, but Alex Rodriguez contends that the city's problem is "interethnic tension" rather than outright racism. "In America we have a real mental illness about integration, that we must treat those who come in as we were treated. American blacks mistreat Haitians in Roxbury [a section of Boston]; Cubans mistreat Puerto Ricans and Dominicans." That phenomenon is exacerbated by the fight for scarce resources, he says. "Obviously you want to get for your family first. Families happen to be defined ethnically."

In any case, Rodriguez is convinced that Lawrence, which is ethnically mixed, is light years ahead of cities that successfully exclude Hispanics or other minority groups. He points to Methuen, just north of Lawrence, as one of those communities that say "We're not going to let the bastards in." People in Lawrence are at least "trying to make the experiment work," Rodriguez says.

Maybe. But dirt-poor, disenfranchised Hispanics—many of whom tried to make it in Boston and other nearby cities before landing in Lawrence—are desperately unhappy with their condition. Unable to find work, taunted by French-Canadian neighbors, "protected" by often hostile white police and uncertain whose bedroom will receive the next rock or brick, the Hispanic community has emerged from its days of unrest into an uneasy calm. ALFIE KOHN

Alfie Kohn is Boston correspondent for USA Today.

Up, Up and Away!

The House and Senate yesterday overwhelmingly approved $70 million of President Reagan's $117 million request for additional military assistance to El Salvador, clearing the way for Congress to leave town last night on a nearly month-long recess. —The Washington Post, *August 11*

During such recesses, members of Congress become world travelers. It is hard for them to eschew an opportunity to travel for a week or so in Europe or the Orient in the manner of the immensely rich. On the eve of an approaching recess or "district work period," as the shorter ones are called, there is an overwhelming temptation to compromise tough issues and leave town.

So on August 10, the eve of the junketeering season, the House reversed its earlier decision to reject any additional arms aid to El Salvador during this fiscal year. Members who had once loudly proclaimed their displeasure with burgeoning outlays to a vicious and stumbling dictatorship agreed to extend assistance, bringing the military aid total for this fiscal year to three times the level of the previous one.

A compromise measure setting assistance at $40 million was not seriously considered. After a few minutes' deliberation, the Senate approved the House action by a voice vote. If the House had taken a little more time, members might have felt the heat of public opinion and at least reduced the amount to the lesser figure.

However, many of them were eager to board the military planes, almost as luxuriously appointed as Air Force One, that were waiting to whisk them away. To have bickered over the price of the aid would have caused inconvenient delays. Military personnel had worked so hard arranging the trips abroad. There are so many details to be settled with the U.S. Embassy in the countries being visited: Envelopes containing the appropriate currency must be prepared so they can be handed to the senators and representatives on their arrival. Entertainment must be arranged, interspersed with a decent amount of briefing on matters of state. Staffs of U.S. uniformed equivalents of butlers and chauffeurs must be assembled.

To have continued the session for a few days or a week would have upset the plans and required all manner of rearrangements of the schedule by cable and overseas telephone—all for a picky $30 million.

The August 10 eleventh-hour compromise on El Salvador military aid is not an isolated case. Scores of such settlements under pressure of imminent adjournment for recess or district work periods are made each year. The cost of the junkets is trivial compared with the added costs of interrupting the legislative process and of hasty decisions about spending huge sums of public money. A little deeper consideration, a little more bargaining, a little more time for public opinion to gel could save the nation billions.

If House Democrats believed strongly in the principles they espoused about not throwing away money on an attempted military solution of deeply political and economic problems in El Salvador, they should have bargained a little longer with the Senate. The Republicans were eager to adjourn so they could get to their convention.

Merely the urge to get away from Washington—to shore up political dikes, to junket or whatever—turned a number of Democratic votes; and, as long as the August recess and the district work periods are set as rigidly as they have been in the last seven years, such votes will be turned again and again.

Speaker Tip O'Neill's opposition to ballooning military aid to El Salvador was admirable, but his opposition on the floor was not as eloquent as would have been his firm declaration that the House would not adjourn until a studied solution could be reached. ROBERT C. ECKHARDT

Robert C. Eckhardt is a former Democratic Representative from Texas.

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BEAT THE DEVIL.

Morning After

The day after Geraldine Ferraro's press conference I hastened to the local store in Bourne, Massachusetts, to read the reviews. Halfway down its front page the *Cape Cod Times* had a two-column headline reading "Nothing to hide, Ferraro says" above the Associated Press dispatch by Michael Sniffen which had Ferraro speaking "calmly but forcefully"—two good adverbs—in the third paragraph. The *Worcester Telegram* had "Facts Bared, Ferraro Eager to Campaign" above the same A.P. story.

The Boston Globe ran the story as its main news lead under the headline "Ferraro: Obligation has been 'fulfilled'" with a sidebar, headed "A show of mettle through adversity," rich in such friendly verbal undergrowth as "sure-footed performance . . . disarming political dexterity," rising to the climax of "displayed under heavy journalistic fire a degree of mettle that startled even her closest aides." *The Globe*, as you can see, really is a liberal paper.

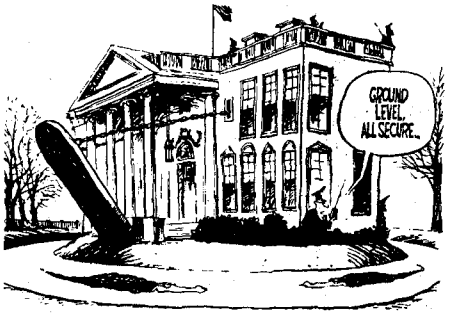
The Providence Journal had the far less sympathetic headline "Ferraro concedes sloppy records, errors, but denies she or husband did any wrong" above a story from *The New York Times* News Service. In its front-page "What's News" column, *The Wall Street Journal* quoted Republicans as saying Ferraro handled herself well and the incident could redound to her benefit. *The New York Times* was the least sympathetic, rolling out the kick-her-when-she's-getting-up rhythms embodied in its inside banner head, "Ferraro Denies Any Wrongdoing but Admits Some Mistakes Were Made." Its editorial was better, concluding flatly that Ferraro was in the clear. This was scant comfort for Walter Mondale, however, since a *Times* front-page news analysis that same morning was headed "Troubles for Democrats."

Wimp Equals Limp

The problem is that many Americans are getting confused. The mostly male commentators seem intent on proving that Mondale, whom they despise, is a woman and that Ferraro, whom they respect, is a man. The addition of John Zaccaro makes the ménage highly worrisome. And Ferraro is forced to prove that she is tough and independent and at the same time married to a real man. It's all enough to make the great Genet blink.

Mondale has unerringly done President Reagan the best, and himself the worst, possible favor in making "tax, sweat and tears" his campaign theme (this is scarcely surprising, given his Methodist background). Some Americans who like Reagan but feel guilty for doing so will displace their guilt on preachy Mondale and direct their anger and shame toward him, thus leaving the Leader without blemish. And just as all anxieties about the deficit are being displaced on Mondale, so too is the "sleaze factor," once thought to be a Republican albatross, being displaced on Ferraro and her unfortunate husband, whose financial dealings are strictly small time, when viewed in the context of the majestic Republican shenanigans of the past four years.

I think people rather enjoy the fantasy dream-life of which Reagan is both symbol and masterly exponent. What some columnists are describing as the President's "Teflon coating" or "amazing luck" is really popular reluctance to see the symbol/exponent seriously damaged. The Reagan Administration has, after all, knowingly inflicted enormous suffering on children. It has cut school lunches, cut Aid to Families With Dependent Children, cut child-abuse programs. As psychohistorian Lloyd deMause puts it in his new book, *Reagan's America*, after four years of Reagan we have "over twenty million children suffering needless pain, hunger and death with barely a mourner in sight." The displaced response has been the sudden discovery of, and campaign against, child abuse. As deMause says, "Why do we almost *never* feel any guilt for the death of innocent people we hurt and kill through political means? The answer to this question is that *we displace our guilt into criminals.*"



Anyone who followed the Olympics will know the reverberations of the word "dream" in America, and deMause provides a vigorous account of the oneiric, delusional procedures of the Reagan years. I've long been a fan of the psychohistorians, particularly deMause and his colleague Casper Schmidt, for they provide the richest decoding of the impulses of our age. As deMause concludes:

> So powerful was the manic feeling of excitement after Grenada, all of America seemed to have acquired an erection as we awaited the next rape-and-kill invasion. "Americans are now standing tall and firm," Reagan told us, and columnists echoed his metaphor by praising him for "stiffening our foreign policy" [and cartoonists followed suit, as the illustration on this page shows]. Rape stories acquired new prominence in the news media, from specials discussing rape to fiction portrayals of rape victims. . . . Besides rape, cannibalistic fantasies multiplied in the media—representing our "biting" rage, just like the "Man-Eater" fantasies of primitive ritual. Usually we experienced our biting rage only in projected form. While our top song warned us "Watch out boys, she'll chew you up—She's a Man Eater" and our Democratic candidates for president asked "Where's the beef?" our president told us that, "like a roving wolf, Castro's Cuba looks to peace-loving neighbors with hungry eyes and sharp teeth."

The hardest part is finding a *casus belli* for the final offensive against the Empire of Evil in all its manifestations. As a mime war, the Olympics were frustrating because of the absence of the Soviet Union and others, though the media did manage to convert their absence into unconditional surrender. Now that the Olympics are over the focus will swing back to Central America, for which all are preparing themselves.

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ALEXANDER COCKBURN

The Party of Pain

You can always spot someone from the *Commentary* crowd by the way they quote Jean-François Revel, as Jeane Kirkpatrick did in her speech in Dallas. I thought she looked adorable in a green high-shouldered hussar suit and tousled mop of gold hair, like a walk-on character from *Lola Montez*. (I shall provide physical details of Jack Kemp, Trent Lott and other male cuties in this space in the near future.)

Otherwise, the Republican Convention was pretty traditional stuff. But consider the differences between the political proceedings in Dallas and in San Francisco. The Republicans gathered to compose their platform after nearly four years of a President undeniably "conservative" in idiom, inclination and deed. The columnists anticipated some purely honorific ceremonial. Yet the Republican "ideologues"—those with an idea of where they want their party to go and with the energy to try to accomplish their objectives—had no qualms about ignoring Reagan's pleas that they not embarrass him with categorical vows in the platform not to raise taxes. Indeed they publicly threatened to desecrate the holy of holies, in the form of Paul Volcker, chairman of the Federal Reserve. They got what they wanted, even if it meant being "divisive" and "embarrassing the President."

The Democrats, on the other hand, emerged from San Francisco supposedly unified and mustered round their nominees, one of whom promises to put up taxes and the other of whom boasts of throwing people into prison. Such rhetorical themes are intended to show a great party in the process of self-renewal. Now, the Democratic Party does have its version of the Republican supply-siders, albeit far less coherent. This faction, associated with the ideas of economists Samuel Bowles, David Gordon, Thomas Weisskopf and other Turks-in-midlife-crisis have made the case for a full-employment economy, based on low interest rates, planning and many of the appurtenances of left Keynesianism. It wouldn't banish the ineluctable modalities of overaccumulation and the falling rate of profit, but it would be better than Mondale's warmed-over Hooverism. But there is no sign that the Democratic supply-siders have the slightest purchase on party policy.

We are left with the Republican Party as the repository of ideas, even though they are entirely contradictory, as in the rhetoric about simultaneously curbing Volcker, not raising taxes and balancing the budget.

The Gay Cardinal

It's touching to hear the Catholic hierarchy reacting angrily to allegations, contained in John Cooney's forthcoming book about the man, that Francis Cardinal Spellman was gay. I had always thought that the homosexuality of Spellman was one of the few facts in the long history of the Roman Catholic Church that is truly beyond dispute—far more soundly based than the dogma of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, which was promulgated in 1950, just about the time that Spellman, known as Fanny by Eleanor Roosevelt, was at the peak of his rampages.

People think it hypocritical that this man of God should have blessed the bombing of peasants in Vietnam and then gone cruising. I can't quite understand the logic of that. Would it have been more seemly if Spellman had *denounced* the bombing and then gone cruising? This seems to argue that it's all right for faggots to be peaceniks, but if you want to drop bombs on people you have to be straight, and—*pari passu*—the only way to be an anti-imperialist is to be gay. This is the kind of psycho logical blind alley that gave the late 1960s a bad name.

Kondracke's Nightmare

Since we're on the subject of homosexuality we should note a boomlet of fag-bashing, scarcely surprising in these sour days. A good example can be found in a syndicated column written by *New Republic* executive editor Morton Kondracke. Kondracke was much upset by language passed by the Democratic Party's rules committee to the effect that state parties should try to achieve full participation by "lesbians and gay men" in the delegate selection process.

Sweating into his crystal ball, Kondracke predicts that it will not be long before there will be a mandated quota of gay delegates. "Slowly but inevitably," mused the aghast Kondracke, "the Democratic Party is becoming a vehicle—as the Republican Party is not—for the advancement of gays to equal acceptance and to political power." Along with the rest of us, Kondracke asks, "What's wrong with this?" He has his answer ready: "What's wrong, in part, is that full acceptance of gays will lead to acceptance of the pathologies associated with the gay life-style, including promiscuity and sado-masochism."

He's right, of course. After the Democratic Party accepted blacks you could hardly hear yourself think around the D.N.C. offices, what with the noise of ghetto blasters and the screech of little old ladies having their purses snatched. The party just hasn't been the same since.

On August 19 George Will picked up on the Kondracke theme on David Brinkley's show, asking Geraldine Ferraro whether the mandate stipulating that the Democrats' Fairness Commission include gay representatives meant the party was morally neutral on homosexuality. Instead of saying yes, Ferraro looked flustered, hanging onto the rope with the plea that she hadn't studied the mandate's text.

Double Cross Dresser

There's one story about Cardinal Spellman that I always particularly liked. At the height of the Vietnam War he once announced that the harshness of the times rendered it unseemly for each bishop at a major upcoming service at St. Patrick's to be attended by more than two altar boys. The great day came and the bishops dutifully heeded Spellman's decree, with the Spartan accouterment of only two altar boys per bishop, one fore and one aft, each swinging his censer. At the last came Spellman, magnificently attended by scores of altar boys and clouds of incense swirling about them. At last one bishop broke the stunned and furious silence of his colleagues, hissing "Francis, *you bitch*."

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CALVIN TRILLIN

Earlier this summer, Russell Baker, the distinguished columnist for *The New York Times*, reported in his column that he had nearly been run down by an unidentified, presumably homicidal bicyclist on the streets of Manhattan. I am now prepared to say that I was that bicyclist. There! I've said it! What a load off my chest! I almost feel like confessing to a lot of things I had nothing to do with. Not quite. I was not responsible, for instance, for the plan to install Bert Lance as chairman of the Democratic National Committee. I know some people have been saying otherwise. (That kind of talk gets back to a person.) In 1981, it is true, I confessed in public print that every national administration made me nostalgic for the previous one. I even revealed that I had been heard to say, about the time the Reagan Administration was beginning to get its nose in the trough, "Come back, Bert Lance—all is forgiven." What I said about Bert Lance, though, was meant as a little joke. It was obviously not a request for action. I've just admitted, right here in front of everybody, that I almost ran down a distinguished columnist on the streets of Manhattan, but I had nothing to do with the Bert Lance decision and I don't intend to take the rap for it.

I meant Russell Baker no harm. I like Baker. I did what I did for his own good. Believe me, what I did hurt me more than it hurt him—although if I had managed to hit him I suppose it would have hurt him more. In his column, he acknowledged that he had walked into the intersection without checking to see if any bicycles were coming the wrong way down a one-way street. In other words, there were things about the city Baker still didn't know. I was trying to teach him. I used the method boxing coaches use when they first get in the ring with a new welterweight. They say, "Now, lower your guard." The welterweight lowers his guard. They punch him in the nose. Then they say, "That'll teach you never to lower your guard." This is for the welterweight's own good. By actual measurement—Rutgers did a study on this—it hurts the welterweight more than it hurts the coach, but it's still for the welterweight's own good.

In his column, Baker admitted that he got some bad advice before moving to the city. People warned him about the danger of being shot and then stuffed into the trunk of a car, gangland style—something that has happened to him hardly at all—but they neglected to mention the danger of being mowed down by a bicycle. In fact, they neglected to mention something else: in New York, if the mob has any thoughts at all about rubbing you out gangland style, they warn you by having somebody run you down with a bicycle. This has replaced the old kiss-of-death business, which some of the younger mobsters decided was sort of sloppy and not that great for the mob's image. In other words, the close call I gave Baker was not simply a warning to keep an eye out for bicycles coming the wrong way down one-way streets. It was also a warning about what can happen to you in New York if you get the idea that it might be fun to borrow money at high interest from someone who is a lot bigger than you and wears a fedora. Nearly running somebody down with a bicycle is also a general warning, in the way a punch in the nose can be a general warning. As a general warning it means this: Never lower your guard.

Baker is not the only person I have helped in this way. Often, when I read that some distinguished citizen is moving to New York, I take it upon myself to come close to running him down on my bicycle. It's my version of the Welcome Wagon. If New York University has landed a world-class professor for its law school, for instance, I try to brush him back onto the curb some sunny afternoon as he strolls over to Washington Square to see if there are any interesting torts among the chess players. Like a lot of people who do good works, I try to be unobtrusive. I'm not one of those maniacal types you may have noticed bent over four-pound racing bikes—a wild look in the eyes and a whistle clamped between the teeth just in case there is a sudden need to terrify an aged pedestrian. I ride a blue Raleigh three-speed with an exceedingly large basket on it—the 1979 Plymouth station wagon of bicycles. Someone who saw me pedaling quietly up Sixth Avenue might take me for the senior delivery boy at Gristede's supermarket, never dreaming that I was on my way uptown to pay my respects, in a manner of speaking, to the new British ambassador to the United Nations.

Has anybody been hurt? That's what they're always asking the boxing coach: Well, that's all very well, coach, but did you ever break anybody's nose that way? Did you ever give anybody emotional asthma or maybe a snoring problem that proved a considerable liability to an otherwise stable marriage? No. Nobody has ever been hurt. Once, through the unforeseen and sudden appearance of a Sabrett's hot-dog cart, the new first violinist of the New York Philharmonic, a smallish man, was carried several hundred yards in my delivery boy's basket, but he didn't seem upset. In fact, he asked if I'd be interested in delivering him to rehearsals daily. I told him politely that I had some other tasks to do on my bike. Then I rode off alone into the sunset.

What is unusual about the Russell Baker incident, of course, is that Baker is not really a newcomer. It must be eight or ten years since he wrote a particularly memorable piece about the dangers facing anyone who moves to the city: Baker, unable to think of an idea for a column, had gone for a short walk and was almost beaned by a potato that had fallen from a high-rise. Ordinarily, I wouldn't bother to run down anyone who has been in town that long. I made an exception because of Baker's being in the trade. It is still not known, by the way, how the potato happened to fall from the high-rise. Some literary critics believe that Baker's muse dropped it. Some people who have columnists in the family, and thus know how sticky it can get around the house when the columnist can't think of an idea for a column, believe that Baker's wife threw it. In fact, I threw it. It was meant as a general warning: Never lower your guard.

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ARTICLES.

POLICE RIOT IN BELFAST

Day of the Plastic Death

SALLY BELFRAGE

Belfast

On the chilly gray Sunday morning of August 12, Protestant veterans of World War II marched around Belfast's City Hall to lay a wreath of poppies for their fallen comrades. A band played, medals shone, they marched with stiff esprit. Nobody paid them any attention.

At 2 P.M., another parade started up Falls Road. Besides the police who lined the street, there weren't many spectators at this one either. Everyone in the area seemed to be marching. Thousands of men, women and children, bearing banners and waving tricolors (the banned flag of Eire), moved to the beat of sprightly bands playing flutes, drums and bagpipes. Among the marchers were Americans from Noraid, the Irish Northern Aid Committee which raises dollars either for the relatives of prisoners or for guns for the Irish Republican Army, depending on who is your source. The Americans were minus their leader, Martin Galvin, who had been prohibited entry to the United Kingdom but had appeared days earlier in Derry and was thought due to pop up again like Pimpernel at the rally after the procession. The Noraid people, some wearing I.R.A. T-shirts, nearly drowned out the flutes with cries of "I.R.A. all the way!" "It's only Yanks who'd have that nerve," a bystander commented. "They can go home after." The provisional I.R.A., which is banned in Northern Ireland, is something you do not mention like that. You know it is there, and Sinn Fein, its political wing, organized the parade to commemorate the anniversary of the introduction of internment by the British. (On August 9, 1971, hundreds of Republicans were arrested in a dawn swoop by police and held without charge.)

Most parades have boring bits, long stretches between floats or bands when all the participants do is trudge, not necessarily in step. This one, despite its serious purpose, was irrepressibly merry, melodic and bright. Only when the parade got near Connolly House, the Sinn Fein headquarters, were there signs of trouble. A helicopter flying low was said to be photographing everybody. Scores of gray armored Land-Rovers of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (R.U.C.) were parked in a U to block the parade; as the marchers approached, some boys who clustered on the roofs of the shops opposite began throwing stones. The police responded without an instant's pause, firing plastic bullets, and a cataract of boys spilled off the roofs while onlookers, panicking and screaming, fled for their lives. Too many people (fifteen) have been killed since 1973 with these tactical crowd-control weapons, and too many have been maimed and blinded, for any illusions about their harmlessness to remain among the Catholics, at whom they are invariably aimed. The bullet, a four-inch white cylinder, one and one-quarter inches in diameter, is fired from a wicked wide-muzzled sawed-off gun.

From a rostrum Gerry Adams, the leader of Sinn Fein, pleaded for peace and calm. A minute later he asked for first-aid assistance. Two people—bagpipers—had been hit. An ambulance arrived and carried away a teen-age girl wearing a band uniform. The demonstrators were used to this sort of sight. Though depleted, the crowd still filled the square. Adams asked them to sit down to show their pacific intentions. They obeyed immediately, and became a sea of sitting families, surrounded by gray-uniformed, armed and helmeted police, whose backs were to their vehicles. Only the press stood en masse, hoping for Galvin to show. Above them on the platform Adams introduced a speaker from Britain's Troops Out movement, then a Sinn Fein member, who delivered a message from the prisoners in Long Kesh and Armagh. And then—after a final plea to the police to understand from the nature of the seated people that their purposes were peaceful—he introduced Martin Galvin, who strode out of Connolly House at the rear of the platform. As Galvin took the microphone, the police charged.

They came in from all sides, ramming and running over people with their armored cars, bludgeoning them with truncheons, loosing hundreds of plastic bullets point-blank into the crowd. The air was full of puffs of smoke and cracking rifle reports as spectators went down. Sean Downes, 22, attending the rally with his wife and 18-month-old baby, was shot in the heart in full view of the photographer from London's *Daily Mail.* Television cameras also recorded the brutality. Press people themselves were manhandled, threatened and beaten. One had his film taken and all were stampeded and pushed aside in the rush for Galvin, who escaped the melee with the help of two look-alike Sinn Fein decoys (one was arrested and later released). Rumors that Galvin disguised himself as a policeman turned out to be false; he dyed his hair.

In moments the square was clear but for the police, with their smoking guns, and huddles of hysterical, weeping people, who were shot at if they tried to move. The injured lay bleeding everywhere. One man had a gaping hole in his cheek which spurted blood every time he breathed. A 7-year-old bled profusely from one ear; an elderly man lay unconscious, shot in the back of the head. Medics were frantically trying to revive Downes, who had turned blue. Twenty people were injured and many hospitalized, which says something about their condition: Catholic plastic-bullet victims don't go to the hospital in Belfast unless their lives depend on it because those who do are charged with rioting in order to justify their having been shot. When I heard this explanation, it seemed a bit off to me, as did

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other stories about the workings of the law one hears in the Falls Road area, Belfast's Catholic neighborhood. Then I read the press statement released by the constabulary after the shooting, which completely contradicted what I had witnessed:

> They [the police] were attacked and obstructed by groups within the crowd, which numbered in excess of 2,000, obviously determined to prevent Galvin's arrest and who had been instructed from the platform to do so. To protect themselves from those throwing missiles and to effect entrance to Connolly House, the door of which had been barricaded after Galvin had entered, a total of 31 plastic baton rounds were discharged—a number of them in the air to disperse the crowd. . . . Initial reports indicate that 20 persons were taken to hospital, and a 22-year-old man, who was identified as a rioter, was found to be dead on arrival at hospital.

The following day the R.U.C.'s chief constable, in ruling out an independent inquiry on the incident, went into more detail:

> Before Galvin appeared stewards positioned women and children outside the railings in front of the platform. . . . The decision to intervene and arrest Galvin was an operational decision taken with regard to the circumstances existing at the time, based on the principle of speed using minimum force. Twelve baton rounds were fired at this time in the air to disperse the crowd and one to force the door of Connolly House. Baton rounds were not discharged into groups of bystanders, as has been alleged. . . . One man died and police have evidence as to his actions prior to his death. He was clearly identified as a member of the party who were rioting and his actions were also clearly witnessed.

The British Northern Ireland office backed the constabulary: "It is clear that there was an organized attempt to attack the security forces."

Over the water in England the reaction was mixed, but everyone talked about Sinn Fein's "propaganda victory," "propaganda harvest" and "propaganda martyrdom." It was left to Shirley Williams, president of the Social Democratic Party, to point out that "not since Peterloo in 1819 have British police shot anyone dead at a peaceful meeting." Actually, if no one had been killed, the event might have escaped much attention: plastic bullets are as common in Belfast as graffiti is in New York City. I have a plastic bullet I picked up while it was still hot, after it had been shot at young people commemorating the internment anniversary with bonfires the previous Tuesday night. They had run before the police as if they were the bulls at Pamplona. Many mantelpieces sport a bullet as a trophy, and children sell them on the street. According to the R.U.C.'s own guidelines, constables should not fire them at less than twenty meters "unless there is a serious threat to the safety of officers or others," and they should aim below the waist and fire selectively, not indiscriminately, when in a crowd. But the guidelines are apparently as reliable as the R.U.C.'s press statements. Sean Downes is dead, and the blame must be assigned. Of the local papers, the (Protestant) *Newsletter* blames Galvin, the (Catholic) *Irish News* blames the police, and the (Protestant) *Telegraph* blames Sinn Fein. The British press largely blames James Prior, Secretary for Northern Ireland, for excluding Galvin in the first place. (He later tried to cool things down by accepting all responsibility.)

But in order to determine who is to blame, it is useful to consider who gains. When the New Ireland Forum, a consultative body open to all nonviolent parties, Catholic and Protestant, issued its report in May, people glimpsed the first hope in years of a chance to resolve the interminable Irish problem. It is, of course, a problem of two minorities: the Catholics in the six counties of Northern Ireland, the Protestants in Ireland as a whole. The Protestants are by and large not interested in a solution, seeing any solution as involving some diminution of their absolute power in the North. The Protestants man the Royal Ulster Constabulary, and the British sponsor and control it. As a result, the Catholics have no faith in the law whatsoever. They don't even bother to report a burglary. Most have an extremely antagonistic view of the British and distrust any solution the British back. The British legal process in the province is one terrible joke: anyone connected with a "political" crime by uncorroborated accomplice evidence, or by dubiously extracted confessions, is tried in a special court without a jury and is denied "political" status in the prisons. Both Catholics and Protestants have paramilitary organizations dispensing their own rough justice. Neither is remotely interested in a peace that will negate not only their very different aspirations but their very existence. The large numbers of Northern Irish who are fed up have little influence in the conflict—there are too many others with a vested interest in it. Such faint hopes as there were for peace have now been, as *The Times* of London headlined its editorial on the matter, "All Undone in a Day." □

LETTER FROM EUROPE

The French C.P.—On the Way Out?

DANIEL SINGER

The French Communist Party has no future in the government. Does it have a future outside it? Answering that question, crucial for the left well beyond France, requires an analysis of the party's recent spectacular decline in more than electoral terms.

At the beginning of 1968 the French C.P. was a sheep in wolf's clothing, a party committed to parliamentary participation pretending to be a revolutionary organization. That May, when students and young workers precipitated the biggest strike in the country's history, the C.P., far from leading the movement, found itself in the rear, dragging the French workers by their overalls toward electoral defeat.

Its reputation and its revolutionary prospects both shat-

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tered, the C.P. realized it was vital to clear the parliamentary road. For that it needed partners, and therefore came to the rescue of the Socialists, who at the time were in even worse shape than the Communists. In 1972 the C.P. signed a common program with the convalescent Socialist Party just taken over by François Mitterrand. This was the period when the French Communist Party could have become, like the Italian, the dominant force on the left, the largest reformist party in its country. To achieve that, it should, like the Italian party, have dismantled its Stalinist heritage quickly, thoroughly and visibly.

The French Communists have so far proceeded with that task both clumsily and halfheartedly. They broke officially with the Soviet model but never examined its nature seriously and did not dissociate themselves from Soviet policy in, for example, Afghanistan. They took chunks out of their program, including such ideas as the "dictatorship of the proletariat," without explaining why or replacing them with anything new. The very process of liberalization was carried on in a most undemocratic way, the poor rank and file learning the latest twist in the party line when its leader, Georges Marchais, was being interviewed on television. Truth and power were flowing from above.

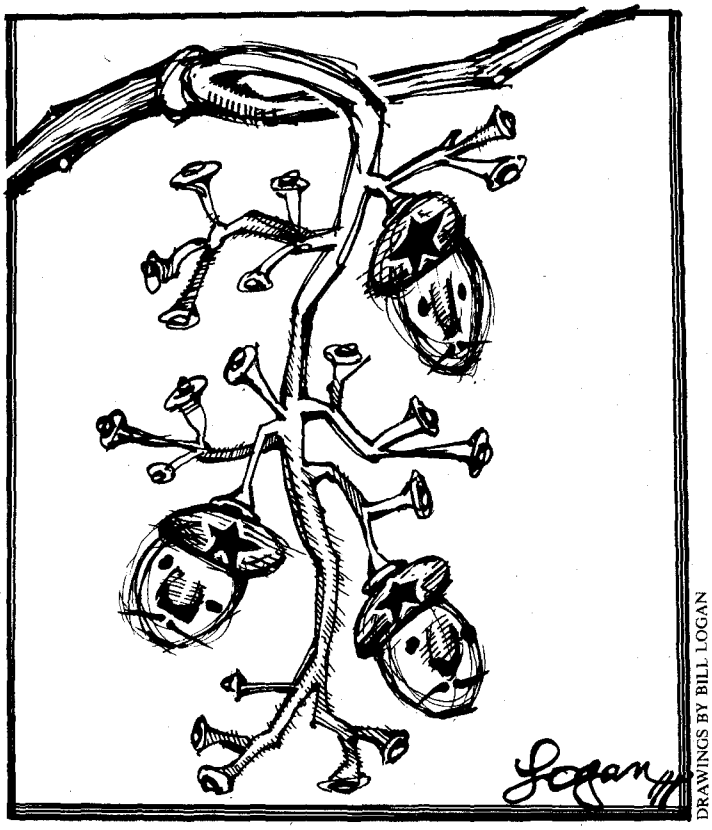
The inevitable happened. The Socialist Party recovered, then began gaining ground. The Communists found out where it hurt—in the ballot boxes—and they altered their strategy of alliance, again misleadingly. They suddenly "discovered" that their Socialist partners were not "revolutionary" and precipitated a break, not on any fundamental issue about the future of society but on the precise number of firms to be nationalized. Though in 1978 the divided left thereby lost a general election that was well within its grasp, the Communists did not immediately pay a penalty. Three years later, in the presidential poll, they paid it with a vengeance, losing a quarter of their support (their share of votes dropped from around 22 percent to just over 15 percent). Eager French leftists rallied to the Socialists, who not only conquered the presidency but also won an absolute majority in the lower house of parliament. With no bargaining power, Marchais opted for government participation without influence.

American commentators who wrote about the "Red peril" in June 1981, when the Communists obtained four of forty-four seats in the new government, had a strange sense of humor. The deal was good for Mitterrand as insurance against labor unrest. It brought little to the C.P., whose ministers soon had to sit silently while the French President preached publicly for Reagan's Euromissiles. True, the first year went smoothly, as electoral pledges were met. Then, the attempt at a Keynesian recovery having failed, the government opted for the classic capitalist cure of austerity, with dire consequences for employment. With the Communist working-class bastions of coal, steel, the automobile industry and shipbuilding under attack, the partners were set on a collision course.

In fairness to Marchais and his colleagues, it must be said that France in the last few years has witnessed a change of ideological climate and an unprecedented anti-Communist campaign. However, the party did its best to help the gulag philosophers, siding with General Jaruzelski rather than the Polish workers, for example. Still, the heart of the matter was economic. You could not belong to a government ostensibly acting as the manager of a capitalist society in crisis, talk like the opposition and remain credible. The verdict came in June in the European Parliament elections. With the C.P. vote at 11 percent—back at its 1928 level—the days of government participation, and probably of Marchais, were numbered. Mitterrand's change of government on July 17 merely precipitated the Communist departure.

If the French Communist Party is to recover, its task is immense. It must solve the never-answered question facing "Eurocommunism": what to put in place of the shattered Soviet model. For a time Western Communist Parties seemed to be groping toward a social democratic solution. The Mitterrand government has dramatically proved that in time of crisis, that is no solution—at least not one that appeals to a left-wing electorate. The C.P. would thus have to demonstrate to a doubting public that a realistic alternative does exist, that the choice is not limited to "really existing socialism" or bankrupt social democracy.

Throwing Marchais overboard is not enough. The party must undergo a political and cultural revolution, cease to be a machine—by now inefficient—for carrying out orders from above and become a living body searching for a radical alternative. Most people in Paris think the heritage of Stalinism, sclerosis and parliamentary cretinism is by now fatal. But most French Communists are deeply aware that their party's survival is at stake. If they do not soon embark on a genuine and open debate, the Communist exit from the government will merely be a pause on the road toward historical doom. □



DRAWINGS BY BILL LOGAN

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'WERE THE ROSENBERGS FRAMED?'

This historic debate, which was sponsored by The Nation and The New Republic at New York City's Town Hall last October 20th, has been described as "a political-literary brawl" (Los Angeles Times), at which "a cheering, jeering crowd of 1,500 followed every jab in a fight over history" (The Washington Post).

The main participants in the debate were: Walter Schneir and Miriam Schneir, authors, Invitation to an Inquest; Ronald Radosh and Joyce Milton, authors, and Sol Stern, research assistant, The Rosenberg File: A Search for the Truth; and Elizabeth Holtzman, moderator. There were also questions and comments from Michael Meeropol, Morton Sobell, Marshall Perlin, James Weinstein, Victor Navasky and others.

A complete record of this extraordinary event can now be purchased in transcript or cassette. Transcripts are available for $24 each; cassettes are $19 each. There are special discounts on orders of five or more. Send check or money order, payable to The Nation, to: "Rosenbergs," The Nation, 72 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10011 (a project of The Nation Institute).

MEDIA LIB

Free Speech for Broadcasters Only

PAT AUFDERHEIDE

Senator Robert Packwood, powerful chairman of the Commerce Committee which oversees communications issues, has found a cause worth building a bandwagon for; what he calls "First Amendment rights for broadcasters." On the face of it, nothing sounds more patriotic or less controversial than extending First Amendment rights. Packwood's plan to free broadcasters from government regulation, however, radically challenges current policy—and some say it could undermine freedom of speech.

The 1934 Communications Act asserts that radio and television stations must act in the public interest in return for their monopoly licenses to use the airwaves, a limited resource which belongs to the American people. By applying the fairness doctrine and by requiring license renewal hearings every seven years, the government has sought to regulate the industry.

Packwood believes modern technology and business organizations have made such oversight unnecessary. Because, thanks to cable and satellite technology, television sets can pick up a large number of channels, and because telephones and computers can receive electronic messages, he argues, the marketplace will foster diversity of viewpoints by itself. Furthermore, since a TV station, a newspaper and a data service might all be owned by the same conglomerate, it is discriminatory to single out broadcasters for regulation.

Media corporations love that logic, and so do telecommunications companies like A.T.&T. and I.B.M. Advertisers love it too. Under the present system, broadcasters say they are sometimes leery of advocacy or issue advertising because they fear that owing to the fairness doctrine they will have to provide equal time for those holding opposing views. The most eager supporters of broadcasters' liberation, though, are media conglomerates, which are increasingly acquiring holdings in both the broadcast and print industries. Since 1949, the number of newspaper-owned television stations has more than doubled, and a recent industry poll of a thousand newspapers showed that two-thirds were either involved in television or were about to be.

Not everyone thinks diversity in the marketplace of ideas is exemplified by a range that spans *People*, *Money* and Home Box Office, all owned by Time Inc. The Rev. Everett Parker, former head of the United Church of Christ's Office of Communications and considered the founder of the public interest media movement, thinks the airwaves are still

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a scarce resource. "If you want to test it, try to start a radio station in New York," he says. Besides, scarcity or no scarcity, the airwaves belong to the public. But here's the clincher: "Freedom of expression is cut into by conglomerate holdings," he says. "If there is competition, it is between effective monopolies for ratings points. Government licensees are asking to set themselves up to do what government cannot, which is to determine what voices shall be heard."

Whose First Amendment is it, anyway—the corporations' or the people's? The famous Supreme Court case *Red Lion v. Federal Communications Commission* in 1969 put it boldly: "The right of the viewers and listeners, not the right of the broadcasters" comes first. Corporate free speech will come at the expense of individuals, argues Andrew Schwartzman of the Media Access Project, a public interest law firm in Washington specializing in media issues. At the San Francisco-based Public Media Center, a public interest advertising agency, Herbert Chao Gunther voices a similar view: "If corporations want the free speech rights of individuals, then they ought to be liable to capital punishment too."

Broadcasters argue that regulation inhibits freedom of speech: to avoid the risk of having to provide free or cheap air time to opposing views and to all political candidates, they eschew controversy. But public interest advocates argue that the fairness doctrine in particular has guaranteed balance and diversity on the air, frequently in ways invisible to the Federal Communications Commission because complaints are settled privately in meetings between citizen groups and station owners. The fairness doctrine is perhaps most commonly invoked by citizens during local referendums in order to counter expensive, blanket ad campaigns by powerful interests. Recently the nuclear energy industry and the beverage container industry (bucking returnable-bottle laws) have been the targets of such citizen action.

"First Amendment rights for broadcasters" is thus a radical departure from tradition. Senator Packwood knows that, and he is prepared for a long fight. He began in April 1982, calling for a constitutional amendment lifting content regulation on broadcasters. The idea bombed in Congress, where it was regarded as a publicity tactic. So Packwood tried a somewhat more modest approach. He introduced the Freedom of Expression Act, which would abolish the fairness doctrine, its equal-time provisions and the F.C.C.'s watchdog function, monitoring broadcasters' fulfillment of their public interest obligations. Some say this too was a publicity ploy. Certainly no one was surprised when the bill (S.1917) died this summer in Packwood's own committee.

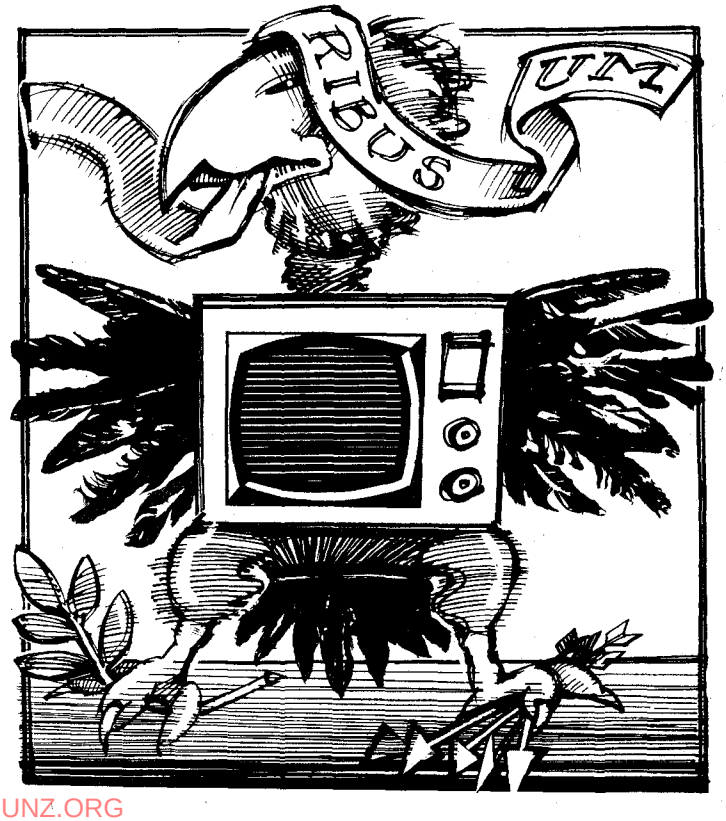
But he remains unruffled. As he told an interviewer for the trade magazine *Broadcasting*, "I figure this is a five-to-ten-year effort." However, he reminded readers—many of whom are members of the National Association of Broadcasters, one of Capitol Hill's most powerful lobbies—that broadcasters must back him.

To coordinate support for his views, Packwood has established a nonprofit foundation. Called the Freedom of Expression Foundation, it is modeled after the Nuclear Freeze Foundation set up by Senators Edward Kennedy and Mark Hatfield in 1982. Packwood's organization was born in his office, and its president, Craig Smith, was head of the Senator's re-election campaign. Its connection with S.1917 is signaled by its telephone number, 546-1917.

Unlike a political action committee, a foundation can accept corporate funds. In its first year Packwood's foundation received a total of $250,000 from six of the ten largest newspaper publishers and from eight of the top ten group owners of television stations, including the three networks. Also pitching in were A.T.&T., I.B.M., M.C.I., Texaco and Boeing. The print media led the rush to donate, with the noteworthy exception of *The New York Times*. But nobody is objecting: publisher Arthur Ochs Sulzberger is personally backing the concept, and his paper has endorsed it editorially.

In the House, Packwood's proposals have been greeted with hostility and intransigence by key players on communications issues. Representative John Dingell, who chairs the Energy and Commerce Committee, has promised to block Packwood's project, saying, "Fairness and equal time are not matters which are subject to negotiation." Representative Timothy Wirth, another active defender of content regulation in broadcasting, is opposed to the bill. Packwood's foundation, however, has been accepted more graciously by his peers. A member of Wirth's staff pointed out that legislators use materials developed by all kinds of interested groups. "Of course, this kind of group [corporate media] has instant access to a lot of money," he said. "But that's politics. This is Washington."

Maintaining a polite distance from actual politicking, the foundation produces research materials, "backgrounders,"



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policy papers and guides for schoolchildren. It also sponsors seminars for schoolteachers. Its first research paper, which argues that the Founding Fathers would never have regulated the electronic media, was published in booklet form. The foundation has been working with a teachers' group to make the booklet available nationally. That tactic, while entirely legal, outrages Beverly Chain, director of the United Church of Christ's Office of Communications. She calls it "disinformation for schoolchildren."

Anyone attempting to influence schoolchildren plans to be around for a while. Certainly Packwood intends to carry the banner of free speech for broadcasters into the next Congress. With his corporate backing and a Republican victory in 1984, he could begin to make his five-to-ten-year plan a reality. Recently, he took his case to the public in an article that appeared in *TV Guide*.

He'll get plenty of support from President Reagan's appointees in the government. The F.C.C. under Mark Fowler, who believes the commission should become a "traffic cop," confining itself to assigning frequencies, has worked hard over the last three years to deregulate broadcasting. It has already lifted most regulations from commercial television, and in the spring it issued an inquiry into the fairness doctrine. The inquiry boldly asked why it should not be abolished. (Traditionally F.C.C. inquiries are at least phrased more objectively.) The first round of comments will be filed on September 6, and the second round is due November 8. But commissioner Mimi Dawson would like instead to launch an omnibus inquiry asking why the F.C.C. should be involved in content regulation at all. Meanwhile, the Supreme Court has hinted that it might reconsider the constitutionality of content regulation, depending on the results of the F.C.C. inquiry.

Americans could pay a high price if Packwood's idea wins popular support, warn public interest advocates. Says Herbert Chao Gunther: "The hoopla about 1984 is getting passé, but the reality is being flaunted in front of us, and Packwood is right out there. If anything can turn this country in a homogenous, undemocratic and dangerous direction, it is the kind of ill-thought-through concept that Packwood is endorsing." □

The New York University School of Law *Review of Law & Social Change* is now accepting articles for Volume XIII. The *Review* seeks articles concerning all areas relevant to the public interest bar. We are especially interested in commentary discussing issues in immigration law, labor law, employment discrimination law, and environmental law.

Articles should be sent to the attention of the Senior Articles Editor. Deadline for submission is October 1, 1984. For additional information please contact the Senior Articles Editor, *Review of Law & Social Change*, 719 Broadway, 5th Floor, New York, N.Y. 10003, (212) 598-3919.

LIKUD OR LABOR?

To Arabs, There Is a Difference

MILTON VIORST

Amman, Jordan

During Israel's long election campaign, and in the jockeying for power that has followed it, reports from some Arab capitals have proclaimed a grand nonchalance about the impending change in Israel's government, contending that Zionism is inherently expansionist and it makes no difference whether the Labor Party or the Likud Party rules. But in Cairo and here in Amman, no one has asserted such a claim. Officially and unofficially it is acknowledged that the makeup of the Israeli government is crucial to the future of the region.

I found a significant divergence in perspective in the two cities, however. In Cairo, where I spent ten days in July, officials did not stifle their cheers as Labor retained its lead in the polls. Although it was with a Likud government that Egypt had signed a peace treaty and established formal diplomatic relations in 1979, Egyptians have long since lost faith in the party's good intentions.

By Egypt's calculation, its relationship with Likud has been extremely costly. Egypt does not regret signing the treaty, nor did I hear any Egyptian, in any circle, claim that peace itself was a mistake. The common complaint was that Egypt had been led to believe by Prime Minister Menachem Begin that the Camp David accord was the first step in an ongoing peace process, when in reality he intended it merely to bar Egyptian interference in the attainment of Likud's objectives elsewhere in the Arab world. It is Egypt's view that Likud exploited the Camp David agreement by invading Lebanon and by proceeding with plans to absorb the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza.

In Egyptian eyes, Anwar el-Sadat had gone to Jerusalem and later to Camp David so that he could divert Egypt's energies from war to its own serious domestic problems. What Begin did after the signing of the peace treaty was take advantage of Sadat's turn inward to humiliate Egypt not only before the world but in its perception of itself. Sadat died believing that Begin—with the complicity of the United States—had made a fool of him, and that he was powerless to do anything about it.

What Hosni Mubarak's government wants from a change in Israeli administrations is an end to that humiliation. The focus, of course, is the Palestinian question, which still carries the burden of Arab-Israeli conflict and remains the key point of honor for the Arab world. It would be ungenerous to suggest that the Egyptians do not care about the plight of the Palestinians. But they care more about the charge—

Milton Viorst, who led The Nation *Fact-Finders Tour to Israel earlier this summer, later visited Cairo and Amman.*

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which has deposed them from their accustomed position of pre-eminence among the Arabs—that they surrendered their honor at Camp David by abandoning the Palestinians, knowingly or not, to the designs of Begin and Ariel Sharon.

What the Egyptians want from Israel is at least the appearance of a resumption of a serious effort to resolve the Palestinian question, thereby reaffirming the validity of Egypt's participation in the Camp David accord and restoring the nation's honor. Such a move would clear Egypt's conscience and justify its continued turn inward. The Palestinian autonomy talks provided for under the Camp David accord are not the only vehicle by which this appearance could be re-established. But it was quite clear during the campaign that of Israel's two principal parties, only Labor was prepared to provide the Egyptian government with the satisfaction it so desperately wants.

Here in Amman, the perspective cuts much closer to the substance of Israeli-Palestinian relations. Jordan once ruled the West Bank. It has a credibility problem with more than half its citizens, who are Palestinian, most of them refugees from Israeli wars. In my judgment, Jordan deeply desires to live in peace with Israel, but for the government here the Palestinian question is not a peripheral issue, as it is in Cairo. It is the only issue in the relationship, and until that question is resolved, there can be no peace. In watching the Israeli struggle for power just across the Jordan River, Amman is less concerned with the appearance of change than with the prospect for change itself.

In fact, if there is no real change—which seems inevitable to most of the Arab world—then Jordan would rather have Likud as a foe. The world at large, perhaps with the exception of the United States, loves to hate the Likud Party. For Jordan, it is more desirable, from a public relations standpoint, to have an Israeli government that looks mean, fanatic and unyielding than one that seems reasonable but is not. So Jordan's sentiments are divided: what is hopeful in its spirit wants Labor; what is cynical prefers Likud.

Jordan's fears center on the prospect of a Labor offer to negotiate that Jordan could not possibly accept, leaving the Palestinian question even further from resolution. For fifteen years Labor has talked of a "Jordanian option," as if it can somehow make a deal with Amman without reference to the Palestinians, and particularly to the Palestine Liberation Organization. In diverse overtures to Jordan, Labor made no headway with this approach in the years before Likud took over the government in 1977, and there is little reason to believe that the approach will make any headway now without significant modification.

In the course of the election campaign, Labor proposed to implement the Jordanian option by offering Jordan a "territorial compromise" on the lands Israel acquired in the 1967 war. In contrast with Likud's plan to retain all the land, members of the Labor Party expressed a willingness to return to Jordan some 60 percent of the West Bank. But Jordan reasons that it already made its territorial compromise in the wake of its defeat in 1967, when it accepted the terms of U.N. Resolution 242. In Jordan's eyes, in so doing it acknowledged the existence of a Jewish state on what was legitimately Arab land in return for Israeli withdrawal from territories Israel had occupied during the fighting.

Jordanian officials say it is impossible for them to contemplate entering negotiations with a Labor government on terms inferior to Resolution 242. They express a readiness to grant whatever security guarantees the Israeli government requires, short of signing away more land. Ironically, they point out, it was Sadat who established the model. Whatever the Arab criticisms of the Camp David accord, Sadat got back all the territory Egypt lost in 1967, and no Jordanian government would settle for less.

The paradox of Labor's commitment to the Jordanian option, officials here told me, is that the P.L.O. is in a position to offer Israel a much better deal than Jordan is. But Israel, backed to the hilt by the United States, steadfastly refuses to have anything to do with the P.L.O.—and Labor has held to that stand with no less fervor than has Likud.

Since 1974, when an Arab summit in Rabat, Morocco, deprived the Jordanian government of jurisdiction over the West Bank, the P.L.O. alone has had the legal claim to negotiate over Palestinian issues. Jordan, which accepts the Arab ruling, would be empowered to do no less than take the West Bank back intact, to which Israel would hardly agree. (Even the Arab side, however, recognizes that some territorial modifications will be necessary, if only to rectify the incongruities of a border established from the cease-fire that ended the war in 1948.) But it is considered likely here that the P.L.O.—to recover a Palestinian homeland after seventeen years of occupation—might be willing to make compromises on borders that Jordan never would.

Meanwhile the P.L.O., bitterly riven by factional disputes, seems to be going in another direction. French President François Mitterrand was in Amman in July, promoting the idea of an international peace conference under U.N. auspices. Yasir Arafat has endorsed that idea and has since visited Amman in search of support for the proposal. He found the Jordanian government polite but, at best, lukewarm to the idea. Expecting nothing from Israel, the P.L.O. maintains its desperate search for help from any source, however remote.

Officials in Amman are realistic enough to recognize that fixing an arena for talks in Geneva or New York City will not change the viewpoints of the chief participants. They see no particular advantage in the involvement of the French in peace talks, much less of the Russians, who have been excluded for so long. They have become skeptical even of American influence in the region and hold out no particular hope that an American government, whether under Reagan or Mondale, will use its power on behalf of a meaningful peace initiative.

What the Jordanians are waiting for is evidence that Israel is willing to make a major shift in position on the Palestinian issue. They are far from optimistic that such a shift will occur but regard it as the only discernible chance for peace in the region. That is why people here have been on edge as they watch the bitter negotiations to form an

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Israeli government; they hope to catch a glimpse of the Middle East's future. □

Big Labor

(*Continued From Front Cover*)

Those who have kept their jobs have also suffered. Average real gross weekly earnings during 1983 for workers in private nonagricultural industries were up from 1982, but were still beneath their 1962 level and were 14 percent lower than their postwar high of 1972. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that 1983 collective bargaining agreements for private as well as state- and local-government workers showed the lowest average wage gains on record.

The Reagan Administration has also undermined workers' statutory rights to job safety and health. Occupational Safety and Health Administration enforcement levels have dropped dramatically under Reagan. Comparing fiscal 1980 with fiscal 1983, for example, shows a 60 percent decline in OSHA complaint inspections, an 86 percent decline in follow-up inspections and a 66 percent decline in recommended penalties. Nor is the agency making much law. During the past few years OSHA has stalled repeatedly and even suppressed its own studies of worker risk in issuing standards for such known workplace carcinogens as asbestos, formaldehyde and EDB. Indeed, after nearly four years in operation, the only final standard for a workplace carcinogen that has been issued by the Reagan OSHA is the standard for ethylene oxide issued in June. But the agency crucially declined to include a short-term exposure limit in its ruling on the chemical, to which workers are typically exposed at high but intermittent doses. The omission makes serious regulation of worker exposure to ethylene oxide impossible, and it is being challenged in court.

At the National Labor Relations Board the story is equally gothic. The Reagan Administration has been foiled in its plans to entrench John Van de Water, a California-based unionbusting consultant, in the N.L.R.B. chair, and is at least temporarily delayed in its current drive to replace Carter-appointed general counsel William Lubbers with the woefully inexperienced (and of course antiunion) Rosemary M. Collyer. But Reagan has managed to get more than his share of ultraconservative appointees approved. On the five-member board itself he has left one seat vacant, but has gained approval of Donald L. Dotson (formerly of the Wheeling-Pittsburgh Steel Corporation, and earlier the labor counsel for Westinghouse Electric and Western Electric) as chair, and of Robert P. Hunter (former aide to Senator Orrin Hatch, a central figure in blocking the Labor Law Reform Bill in 1978) and Patricia Diaz Dennis (formerly of the American Broadcasting Companies and Pacific Lighting) as regular members. The board has also snatched control of agency enforcement litigation from its general counsel and given it to its new solicitor, Hugh Reilly. He comes to the N.L.R.B. after years with the fiercely antiunion National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation.

The effect of the new appointments is obvious. During the first six months of 1984, the Reagan board issued a series of pro-employer decisions, reversing longstanding N.L.R.B. policies in a slew of critical areas. It narrowed the scope of activities subject to traditional N.L.R.B. protection (*Meyers Industries* and *Clear Pine Moulding*); broadened the permissible range of employer conduct in union representation campaigns (*Rossmore House*); lowered the costs of unlawful employer activity during such campaigns (*Gourmet Foods*); and freed employers from the constraints traditionally imposed on work relocation decisions by the collective bargaining obligation (*Milwaukee Spring* and *Otis Elevator*). The N.L.R.B. also announced a broad new policy of deferring cases, whenever possible, to private arbitration (*United Technologies* and *Olin Corporation*), thereby shifting more and more of the costs of dispute resolution to unions, and removing the government as an active player in the enforcement of many statutory workers' rights.

In addition to being the most antiunion N.L.R.B. in history, the Reagan board is also the most inefficient. The best index of board inaction and case backlog, the number of contested cases awaiting decision by the board, has skyrocketed during the Reagan years. As of August, it stood at about 1,450 cases, roughly three times the level it was when Reagan took office; in February it was even higher, about 1,700 cases. That backlog has a huge and geometrically increasing bottleneck effect throughout the board's regional system. It slows the processing of cases at the local level and stretches out the already nearly interminable procedural delays at all different stages of the organizing and bargaining process. This makes it much more difficult for unions to organize new workers, or effectively represent the members they already have.

But while Reaganite attacks on workers and unions have surely contributed to the labor movement's current weakness, they by no means tell the whole story. Nor is the usual litany of changes in the larger economy—demographic trends and structural alterations, the rise of automation and the transition to services, the much-advertised end of "Fordism" and the collapse of traditional industries beneath the pressures of international competition—enough to round out the explanation. Nor, even, is notice of the pre-eminent role played by revived business organization and opposition throughout the 1970s. Important as all those factors are, the truth is that at least some of labor's wounds are self-inflicted, and labor's friends do not help the movement by ignoring this ugly fact.

Everyone agrees, for example, that unions must organize more aggressively than they have in the past and that their

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organizing must target the economy's service sector, which has the greatest employment growth. Even granting the extreme adversity of labor's legal environment, however, it is telling that the number of N.L.R.B. representation elections—in which unions seek to become bargaining representatives for workers—continues to decline and is now less than half what it was as recently as the late 1970s. In 1984, for the third year in a row, the number of union members gained as a result of such elections will be less than 100,000. And while service workers are obviously receptive to unionization (as the success of such unions as the Service Employees International, United Food and Commercial Workers, Hotel and Restaurant Employees and National Hospital and Health Care Workers shows), they have yet to be targeted effectively by the A.F.L.-C.I.O.'s national leadership. In its big Houston organizing campaign, for example, the federation has spent more than $4 million since 1981, but unions participating in the drive have netted only about 14,000 members.

Everyone agrees that democratizing unions is critical to igniting their mass base. During the past few years, however, the A.F.L.-C.I.O. has continued to turn the screws on union dissidents. It supported the United Steelworkers' old guard against insurgent Ed Sadlowski in a lawsuit whose Supreme Court resolution upheld funding restrictions on dissident groups that virtually immobilize them in bids for national union office. And despite some recent gestures toward women and minority groups, the A.F.L.-C.I.O. leadership remains largely a white male gerontocracy in which top slots turn over only upon death, disability or indictment.

Everyone agrees that unions must learn to recognize and defend worker interests in areas other than wages and cash benefits. But the A.F.L.-C.I.O. leadership continues to lag in its attention to noncash issues. At a time when workers' safety and health is under fierce attack, for example, the federation has only one staff person monitoring OSHA full time.

Everyone agrees that trade unions need to reach out and make contact with allies outside the labor movement. But repeatedly over the past few years, obvious possible alliances have been refused. At a time of mounting public concern about nuclear weapons, military buildup and U.S. intervention in Central America, the A.F.L.-C.I.O. leadership has barely reconsidered its longstanding commitment to High Cold War. With Hispanic workers up in arms about the Simpson-Mazzoli bill, the federation joined (until the last moment, two days before the House vote) some of the most reactionary and xenophobic interests in America in endorsing the measure. And while industry and the military have beaten a steady trail to universities—lured by developments in electronics, biotechnology, computer science and robotics—the A.F.L.-C.I.O. leadership has made virtually no attempt to communicate with potential friends there.

Finally, everyone agrees that labor desperately needs to increase its political influence. But how has the A.F.L.-C.I.O. leadership gone about doing that the past few years? By hyping vast Solidarity Day demonstrations which were never followed up. By quietly resuming secret negotiations with the corporate elites of the Labor Management Group—negotiations which had broken off in the late 1970s amid noisy labor protest of business's new "class war." By collaborating on rule changes in the Democratic Party that exclude the rank and file and make it harder for average Americans to influence the leadership. By changing the primary system to give an advantage to early front-runners handpicked by a small group of labor leaders, party regulars and top business figures. By essentially abandoning the fight for full employment in favor of a national industrial policy centered on trade protection and other massive subsidies for a handful of powerful unions. By endorsing Walter Mondale for the Presidency only days before he repudiated the clear implications of that industrial policy in a public letter. By spending millions of dollars to help Mondale squeak through the primaries, only to have him shoot himself in the foot by naming Bert Lance, an infamous foe of labor in the Carter Administration, to head up his campaign.

In short, faced with grave challenges and a hostile environment, the leadership of the labor movement, if not its rank and file, has responded to labor's current predicament in a desultory and ultimately self-defeating way.

What this means for the average American worker is only more bad news and bitter ironies. For example: Fifty years after the teamster-led Minneapolis general strike helped lift labor from the wreckage of the 1920s, Americans are faced with a $512,000-a-year teamster president, Jackie Presser, who will probably support the incumbent Republican President, and a Democratic nominee from Minneapolis in rapid flight from his already feeble commitments to working people and the poor.

Happy Labor Day, everyone. □

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

Justified Times

DOUGLAS CRASE

A WAVE. *By John Ashbery. Viking. 89 pp. $14.95.*

In 1960, during the ten years John Ashbery was living in France, there appeared in this country a 35-cent French thriller called *Murder in Montmartre*. The translator, having been paid by Dell Publishing Company to add some heavy breathing for the American market, signed himself "Jonas Berry"—but if you pronounce the name John Ashbery as they do in Paris and then phoneticize, you'll have a good idea who got the paycheck. Or one of the paychecks, anyway, since Jonas Berry's words had to be overhauled before publication by the pen of Lawrence G. Blochman. The reason, Blochman has explained, was simple. Some translators have trouble with the original French, but this Jonas Berry "just couldn't write English."

So the secret is out. A good thing, too, because in his new book of poems, *A Wave*, John Ashbery is not writing English again, and doing it with such authority you can't ignore what he really is writing—an American so roomy and sure that its appearance among us amounts to a national gift. "I guess I was trying to 'democratize' language" is the way Ashbery put it, referring in a recent interview to the prose-poem meditations in his *Three Poems* (1972). Now, in his eleventh major collection and especially in its long title poem, he has placed the vast prose vistas of *Three Poems* within the lyric measures he realized most explicitly in *Houseboat Days* (1977). In retrospect, it seems an inevitable triumph; and the trio of *Three Poems*, *Houseboat Days* and *A Wave* will probably be seen by his audience as the indispensable core of Ashbery's work.

Not everyone is a member of that audience. But someone approaching Ashbery's poetry for the first time, even for the exasperated second time, will be generously greeted by *A Wave*; the poems in this volume are as lovingly addressed to the reader as any in our poetry since Walt Whitman offered to stop somewhere waiting for you. "Just walking around," writes Ashbery in a poem of that title,

> You always seemed to be traveling in a circle.
> And now that the end is near
> The segments of the trip swing open like an orange.
> There is light in there, and mystery and food.
> Come see it. Come not for me but it.
> But if I am still there, grant that we may see each other.

This is plangent and supplicant. Still, is it enough to explain a poet's growing influence to say he is affectionate toward the reader or has tried to "democratize" language? The diction in "Just Walking Around" is pure enough for a hymn in common measure; but when Ashbery writes elsewhere of "gonzo" or "chroniqueurs," when he chooses at a critical juncture of the title poem to describe a moment as "cimmerian," then he is not exactly writing "plain American which cats and dogs can read"—to judge by Marianne Moore's prescription.

A more complete explanation would have to recognize how this poet writes not just in American, but in an ionized version that looses the poem from attachment to anyone or anywhere in particular. Ashbery is insouciant about place; he is prodigal with pronouns, profligate with tenses and extravagant with evasion and hyperbole. Who, what, where, why and when—they are spun off like freed electrons. The result is a poem that really is "ionized"—a poem seeking to combine. Did the poet ask you to "grant that we may see each other"? The poem likewise seeks to be completed in that meeting. The Ashbery reader must be not so much reader as communicant.

Much of Ashbery's work is available today in some dozen foreign languages. Readers in those languages are not likely to lust after a precise rendering of our vernacular, even if it could survive translation. More likely, they too are attracted by the translatable ionization of syntax and grammar that turns them into communicants. From *A Wave*, an example certain to find its translators soon is the beautiful if foreboding "Rain Moving In":

> The blackboard is erased in the attic
> And the wind turns up the light of the stars,
> Sinewy now. Someone will find out, someone will know.
> And if somewhere on this great planet
> The truth is discovered, a patch of it, dried, glazed by the sun,
> It will just hang on, in its own infamy, humility. No one
> Will be better for it, but things can't get any worse.
> Just keep playing, mastering as you do the step
> Into disorder this one meant. Don't you see
> It's all we can do? Meanwhile, great fires
> Arise, as of haystacks aflame. The dial has been set
> And that's ominous, but all your graciousness in living
> Conspires with it, now that this is our home:
> A place to be from, and have people ask about.

It is remarkable that a poem so periphrastic and evasive can be so frankly chilling at the same time. "The blackboard is erased in the attic"—a description of Ronald Reagan? Or that we are all, as a civilization, without memory? "Great fires/Arise"—nuclear attack? "The dial has been set"—it is long since programmed, and nothing we can do? Nothing, except bask in the bargain we've made with the very danger that is upon us—nuclear peril, or the pricey dollar? The approach of mortality? Maybe just the grim-looking weather. Hard to believe, on this evidence, that Ashbery is sometimes accused of writing frivolous verse; a poem that says we have made our danger our home will be recognized, throughout the NATO countries anyway, as engaged and political.

Or one may at least read it that way; as the poem's communicant you can find in it what you please. "I contain multitudes," enthused Whitman. "So much variation/In what is essentially a one-horse town," writes Ashbery, and it doesn't sound like he's complaining either. At a reading early in 1984, Ashbery told his audience how an idea in "At North Farm" had come from the Finnish folk epic the *Kalevala*. Helen Vendler has since pointed out the trace

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of Keats in that same poem. Yes, our culture is already crowded with literary goodies; but the poet of *A Wave*, though he acknowledges "the luck of speaking out/A little too late," seems to be pleasantly surprised at his luck. How nice to have awakened among all the treasures that are yours to rearrange when you live at the apex, spatially and temporally, of empire:

> It takes only a minute revision, and see—the thing
> Is there in all its interested variegated-ness,
> With prospects and walks curling away, never to be followed,
> A civilized concern, a never being alone.

Civilized, but not overtly committed, perhaps he can deploy each "thing" as the symbol of nothing except what it appears to be in the enjoyable present.

Described this way, Ashbery's prospects and walks sound a lot like postmodernism, and if you feel strongly about the postmodernist ethos you will have started already to make up your mind about this book. Critic Fredric Jameson, having done much to define postmodernism, now laments it as a "failure of the new," a sad admission that the consumer economy has rendered you and me "incapable of achieving aesthetic representations of our own current experience," our times. Instead, we combine off-the-shelf allusions (Keats and the *Kalevala* are good examples) in a pastiche of culture that equals no culture, as all colors together equal none. But before giving way to a verdict of despair in the case of *A Wave*, we ought to remember we are dealing with a poet here, and remember what a poet really does. Allusions to Keats and the *Kalevala* are not the pertinent evidence if a poet, as no-nonsense Dr. Johnson informs me in his dictionary, is "one who writes in measure." Period.

It sounds so old-fashioned, measure. What can it have to do with a poem like "Rain Moving In"—the one three paragraphs back with the flaming haystacks? No *abba* rhyme scheme, no iambic pentameter, but look—fourteen lines, and at lines eight and nine even a "step/Into disorder" to turn us into the sestet. The poem is a sonnet. Maybe it's in free verse, but it's a sonnet all the same. There are also two double sonnets, a tailed sonnet, even a heroic sonnet in this book. Given the teasing titles under which most of them appear, I suppose you could say these sonnets are

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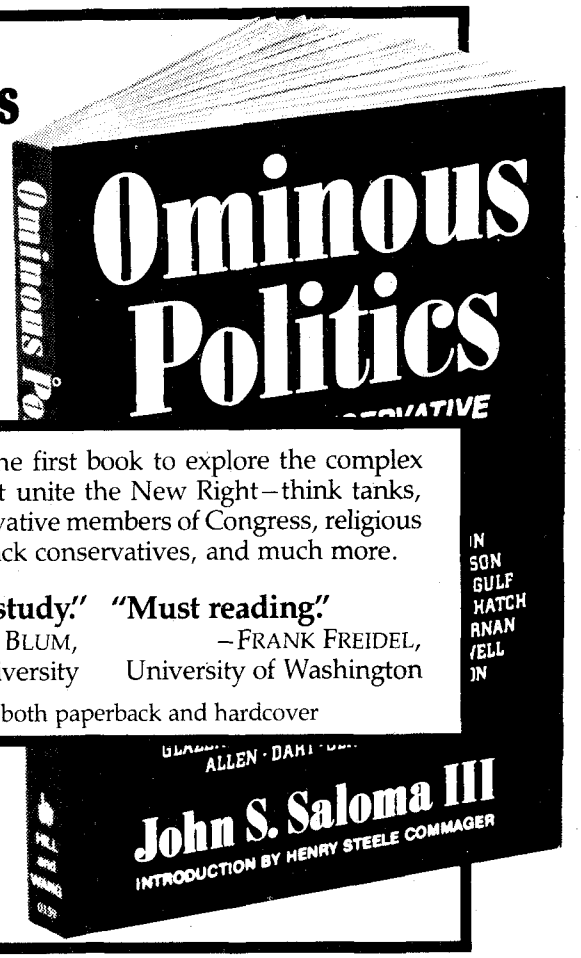

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themselves more proof of pastiche. The sonnet is rich pelf, for sure; its display in our nearly twenty-first-century times is arguably a "failure of the new," a sign of conspicuous cultural consumption. But only if you know it's there. In *A Wave*, Ashbery has reclaimed the form so thoroughly it took me much sleuthing to be sure of its presence; a lot of readers will never know it's there.

And who knows, maybe Ashbery doesn't know the form is there. All the better, because he is demonstrating in these poems how to choose the sonnet, say, as if you actually were innocent of its cultural price tag. Not so innocently chosen, perhaps, is his pantoum "Variation on a Noel." But he is radiantly fresh with the ballade, the Japanese haibun or the three-part ode—one of which, "But What Is the Reader To Make of This?" could be read as the sketch for his new title poem, or crib sheet for the project of his whole career:

> and the general life
> Is still many sizes too big, yet
> Has style, woven of things that never happened
> With those that did, so that a mood survives
> Where life and death never could.
> Make it sweet again!

Sonnet, ode or "the general life"—the way a poet makes it sweet again is by writing like Dr. Johnson says, in measure. In *A Wave*, measure shows itself in the longish, lenitive lines that are Ashbery's special contribution to American poetry and a powerful influence on the work of younger poets. With their prosy cadence and many unaccented syllables, with their strong and frequently medial caesura (the pause within the line), his lines often evoke the French alexandrine—itself brought close to free verse in the works of Verlaine and Rimbaud. If Ashbery's truly is a free verse that beats to a distant alexandrine, then we have a new American measure. Lax and roomy, it would be just the thing to accommodate the poet's need to write in measure with Emerson's stern and just admonition that in America it is the meter-making argument and not the meter that makes the poem. Make a sonnet, say, from such a measure, and you've engaged not in pastiche, but in rejuvenation.

There are 802 of Ashbery's rejuvenating lines in "A Wave," the title poem, which closes the book; and they are grouped in thirty stanzas, the same number as in the ballad for two voices that likewise closes *Houseboat Days*. So the invitation to compare this new poem with a ballad is hard to resist. The traditional ballad is fueled by a single dramatic tension which propels it and its characters toward climax and catastrophe. In "A Wave," that climax is already over, presented in the first three lines of the poem as an accomplished fact; we are left with the poet to consider his emergence on what is called the "invisible terrain" that comes after. We are also left with another 799 lines in which the ballad's regular rules of the road will be modified further. Is a ballad dramatic and impersonal? Then "A Wave" will be the opposite: an iterative, largely inconclusive analysis of private motivation and attainment. In fact, "A Wave" is nothing less than a dialogue of self and soul, what the poem itself calls "the subjective-versus-objective approach." Ashbery has admitted before to removing subtitles in order to make his work more mysterious. But if you label the stanzas of "A Wave" alternately as A and B you will discover that the poem blossoms without losing its mystery or going to seed. "Were we/Making sense?" asks the B voice. And in your newly labeled next stanza the A voice will offer not so much a considered response as an alternative testimony: "And the issue/Of making sense becomes such a far-off one. Isn't this 'sense'—/This little of my life that I can see . . . ?"

The sense at issue here is very much the one that troubles the landscape of postmodernism: How are individuals to make sense of the "invisible terrain" of our own times? How can you image the world? In our culture, with grace and good works equally suspect, this has become the issue of personal salvation itself—certainly ever since Emerson reported to his journal on October 25, 1840, the famous dream in which an angel presented him with the world, and he ate it. Of course if you digested the world in 1840 you might treat yourself to a pretty grand salvation. All human incursions together were "so insignificant," as Emerson wrote in *Nature*, amounting to no more than "a little chipping, baking, patching, and washing, that in an impression so grand as that of the world on the human mind, they do not vary the result."

Well. Tell that to the reader at near twenty-first century who, if he or she eats the world, will have incorporated a resource-limited, environmentally compromised, politically bewitched little ball which can be made to go poof in an instant by one culturally arrested septuagenarian. Can it be good for your health to digest an image like that? In "A Wave" there is some disagreement. Voice B proposes that you just "come up with something to say,/Anything," because "The love that comes after will be richly satisfying,/Like rain on the desert." A is not so convinced and is beset by "the opposing view" that once you've put everything in your own words you will be locked in the tiny cell of the self, "*frei aber einsam*," free but lonesome. Yet A and B aren't really arguing the point. And thus does "A Wave" perform its trick: as a discourse, it's so busy settling nothing that it keeps you occupied until long after you've started to image the "invisible terrain" of the present in the poem's new style.

The brave hearts of every generation must need to feel their times are new, and worth imaging in selves and souls. How much those feelings depend on the assurance that the planet has prospects beyond one's own lifetime is a matter we can only speculate on. Certainly there are millions throughout Europe and North America who believe they have been dispossessed of that assurance, and long to have it back. They do not all, not even most of them, read John Ashbery. But their longing helps explain further how his work has become a central event in poetry. In the face of factual dispossession, Ashbery has created a language that restores newness as you read, a language that is always cresting with potential like a wave:

> It passes through you, emerges on the other side
> And is now a distant city, with all
> The possibilities shrouded in a narrative moratorium.
> The chroniqueurs who bad-mouthed it, the honest
> Citizens whose going down into the day it was,
> Are part of it, though none
> Stand with you as you mope and thrash your way through time,
> Imagining it as it is, a kind of tragic euphoria
> In which your spirit sprouted. And which is justified in you.

This is not parody, not pastiche, but an affirmation of the individual refashioned in such a way that it can be put back into Western poetry without embarrass-

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ment. No wonder his readers return Ashbery's affection. If you let him, he will restore you to a world we thought was lost, one where the times are justified in the spirit of the individual—you. □

'Little Boy' and After

MARIA MARGARONIS

THE DAY AFTER WORLD WAR III: The U.S. Government's Plans for Surviving a Nuclear War. *By Edward Zuckerman. Viking. 407 pp. $18.95.*

THE ABOLITION. *By Jonathan Schell. Alfred A. Knopf. 173 pp. $11.95.*

SHADOWS OF HIROSHIMA. *By Wilfred Burchett. Verso/Shocken. 123 pp. $17.50. Paper $7.50.*

After the Big One drops, don't worry if you're late with your tax returns. Interest penalties will be waived—provided your oversight is not due to "willful neglect." As soon as it's safe to go outside, register with the Labor Department in your host area and be sure to fill out Emergency Change of Address Cards for yourself and any dead relatives. The Post Office has pledged to follow you through rain, snow, gloom of night and nuclear holocaust, even to the grave.

If that's where you would rather be when the missiles come whistling in, you probably won't be comforted by Edward Zuckerman's account of the government's maniacally detailed plans for weathering a nuclear war. It will, however, give you a good sense of our leaders' peacetime priorities. Most post-nuclear planning is dedicated to preserving the free-market economy and to "winning" the war, which means fighting until we can make peace with "nuclear offensive capabilities" still in reserve.

At the first signs of impending calamity, the nabobs of Exxon, A.T.&T. and the banking system will head for their emergency operations centers, mostly deep underground. Meanwhile the President will be spirited aloft by "kneecap," or the National Emergency Command Post, a 747 fitted with a gold-upholstered Presidential suite, a red phone and a wall of display screens. Circling above the mushroom clouds in close communication with the generals at the Strategic Air Command, the President will orchestrate Armageddon. The rest of us, if we are not little piles of dust, will supposedly be settling into fallout shelters amply fortified with dirt, keeping up morale by making "arts and crafts products [which] can be shown and admired."

The uneven fortunes of survivalism have naturally followed those of the cold war. Truman invented it; Kennedy was keen on it; and the Berlin crisis triggered a boom in the private shelter business. In the 1950s and 1960s, civil defense planning was meant primarily for domestic consumption; when it was revived in 1978 as "crisis relocation," it was closely tied to the Pentagon's arcane calculations of the strategic balance. Simply put, the idea was that the Russians would be more likely to believe that we would nuke them if we appeared to believe that we would survive if they nuked us. To the Reagan Administration, civil defense has a more direct military function as part of the infrastructure for a protracted nuclear war.

But the primary function of civil defense has always been propaganda. The beauty of the government's plans is that they almost make nuclear war seem fun. There's the Spielbergian wonder of it all: inside the poetically named Mount Weather, hollowed out in the late 1950s to house the government during the last battle, stands a whole mini-city complete with "offices, residences, streets where electric cars travel, and a lake-sized reservoir." But there's also the ultimate apocalyptic adventure fantasy: What would it be like if one could emerge, like Noah, from a fallout shelter to a world washed clean by fire and start afresh—supported, of course, by the Post Office and the carefully preserved Social Security Administration?

The main flaw in Zuckerman's otherwise excellent book is that it makes you wonder whether the author himself is heading down the garden path with a few cans of beans and a survivalist's shovel on his back. Zuckerman convincingly anatomizes the political agendas behind different theories of nuclear war's effects, from the Federal Emergency Management Agency's calculations of survivability to Jonathan Schell's "drumbeat of nuclear horror." But his own position on civil defense is hidden by the deadpan irony with which

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he discusses the Pentagon and the peace movement alike. His skepticism about prophecies of extinction is not due to hawkish tendencies but to a well-founded mistrust of the doomsday Cassandras who, he suggests, may do the peace movement more harm than good. Nevertheless, it is possible to believe that a nuclear confrontation might not mean the end of the world and still oppose civil defense planning, which as part of the preparations for nuclear war is wasteful, misleading and dangerous.

In some antinuclear circles it is almost sacrilegious to criticize Jonathan Schell's *The Fate of the Earth*, the book that was meant to shock America into pacifism and bring us back from the brink. But misgivings like Zuckerman's will only be confirmed by Schell's new book, *The Abolition*, a testament to the political dangers of apocalyptic thinking.

In *The Fate of the Earth*, Schell began with the assumption that since nuclear war could mean the end of the human race, we should behave as if it would, and went on to advocate peace through world government. Now, searching for a more realistic solution, he has rediscovered deterrence.

The problem, as Schell sees it, is to find a new way of settling international disputes. Nuclear weapons, he says, have "spoiled war" and removed international affairs from the "state of nature"; world government, or the "civil state," is unlikely to come about in the foreseeable future. But the "deterred state," in which we are bound to live, since nuclear weapons can't be uninvented, has already offered a possibility for peace: "Disputes can be suspended, can be kept in abeyance, without any resolution." The bomb turns out to be a godsend. All we have to do is abolish its dangerous physical incarnation and enshrine its peacekeeping properties in an agreement to preserve the political status quo. The blueprints for the doomsday machine will watch over us; if any power steps out of line, its opponents can rustle up a few missiles in a matter of weeks and threaten to blow us back to the bad old days of Mutual Assured Destruction. The millennium of deterred peace will be with us, the long fuse to the big bang stretched from a tripwire to a safeguard.

Mesmerized by the bright light of doom, Schell is so eager to suspend politics to insure survival that he ignores the realities that make his "solution" impossible. Obviously it's in our long-term interests to abolish nuclear weapons, but it's in the short-term interests of those in power to keep them. Their purpose is not, as Schell argues, to defend national sovereignty but to cover intervention and preserve empires. Deterrence does not keep the peace but breaks it, by freezing the cold war and containing its conflagrations. Like part of the peace movement, Schell is fixated on the weapons and avoids discussions of global ambitions. The way out is not by embalming the "nuclear stalemate"—which he considers "viable and tolerable," at least until we can undertake the long task of solving the world's political and economic problems—but by dissolving it.

Of course, if you believe the world is likely to end tomorrow, Schell's argument is, if not realistic, at least appealing. Terror, as Schell says, inspires conservatism:

> The spiritual task that nuclear weapons have put before us . . . is at bottom to awaken ourselves to a new appreciation and gratitude for the world that is given to us at birth. . . . The nuclear peril seems to call on us to be conservative, insomuch as conserving ourselves and the world is the challenge we now face.

The theory of weaponless deterrence makes nuclear arms into a stern god who will keep us good by keeping us in fear. After all his thinking about the unthinkable, Jonathan Schell has truly learned to stop worrying and love the bomb.

Wilfred Burchett, the Australian reporter who covered every major Third World war and revolution from 1945 until his death last year, had no scruples about confronting power. *Shadows of Hiroshima*, his last book, is an account of his visit to the flattened city three weeks after Little Boy burst, and of the U.S. government's campaign to keep him out, shut him up, discredit him and conceal the effects of nuclear weapons from the world.

Against enormous odds, Burchett made it into Hiroshima just before General MacArthur's ring of censorship closed in, tapping out his story on a Morse handset to London's *Daily Express*. "The Atomic Plague" leaked the horrors of radiation sickness to the West; its message was vigorously denied by the official corps of U.S. journalists in Japan, handpicked by the War Department and led by William L. Laurence of *The New York Times*. Burchett himself was quarantined in a U.S. Army hospital, where his own mild dose of radiation sickness was diagnosed as the side effect of a knee infection.

Burchett's political analysis is driven by a pugnacious mistrust of authority; his experience at Hiroshima started him on a chain of investigations into the history of the bomb and led to a lifetime of antinuclear activism. In crisp, gruff newspaperman's prose he describes how "the citizens of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were . . . victims of deliberate medical experimentation and cold war political expediency." He takes us to Germany with the secret expedition that discovered there was no viable Nazi nuclear program; to Potsdam to watch Truman toughen up against Stalin when he got the glad tidings from Los Alamos; and to Hiroshima a generation

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after the bombing to see the political isolation and determination of the *hibakusha*, or atomic bomb survivors. His brief book is finally more inspiring than either Zuckerman's or Schell's. It offers little wit and no quick fixes, but it does hold up a sense of history and the example of Burchett's own, slightly curmudgeonly courage against the "constellation of class interest, will-to-power and mind-numbing rhetoric" that destroyed Hiroshima. □

Boys' Books

NINA BARRETT

THE DIXIE ASSOCIATION. *By Donald Hays. Simon & Schuster. 384 pp. $16.95.*

BUDDING PROSPECTS: A Pastoral. *By T. Coraghessan Boyle. Viking. 326 pp. $16.95.*

The plight of the American writer is at best difficult; aware that the greatest books of our literature remain somehow boys' books, he seeks a way toward maturity.

—Leslie Fiedler

Rafting down rivers, playing ball, becoming an outlaw, doing drugs: From Huck Finn to Jack Kerouac, Americans have honored a literary tradition in which men pursue adventure to escape, or at least to spite, a world of rules, responsibilities and obligations to women. The trouble is that while the male adventure fantasy is still very much alive, the American frontier is long gone. In the hills and valleys of California, where once you could find your fortune robbing stagecoaches and panning for gold, you now need an advanced degree in microelectronics. Drug use, from marijuana to heroin, has become more social than antisocial. And women these days are at least as likely as men to abandon domesticity in the quest for self-discovery.

The extent to which the male escape fantasy has become complicated by these circumstances is illustrated by two recent adventure novels: *The Dixie Association*, a first novel by Donald Hays, and *Budding Prospects*, T. Coraghessan Boyle's third book and, according to him, his first foray into realistic fiction.

Baseball has often provided novelists with a vehicle for proving that their misfit heroes can succeed on their own terms, and *The Dixie Association* is no exception. The narrator, Hog Durham, is a small-time con man on parole, trying to make good on a minor league Arkansas ball club. The odds are against him: his parole officer disapproves of his career choice and threatens to revoke parole on the slightest pretext; then, too, there is the matter of a bank robbery for which Hog has never served time but which certain parties threaten to bring to the attention of the law. Hog's future is, of course, tied to the success of the team, and this novel has enough baseball suspense to satisfy the hungriest fan.

But Donald Hays gives the old underdog ball-team story a timely twist, for if Hog is the team's only convicted criminal, the team itself, at least in its political milieu of the ultraconservative Deep South, is a band of merry outlaws.

The Reds, you see, are coached by a civil rights activist named Lefty Marks, who uses the team to publicize and promote the cause of America's economically and politically disenfranchised. They are a paradigm of integration, with a lineup of blacks, whites, American Indians, a Moslem named Genghis Mohammed Jr., a woman, two Cuban nationals and a Cuban refugee. At every game, Lefty's farmers' cooperative distributes free food to the needy, and Lefty himself works the crowd, handing out programs the team refers to as "manifestoes."

The sheriff is always hot on their trail—not to mention the local business and political leaders. Charging Lefty with being a communist, the town fathers plot to revoke his lease on the ballpark, where they believe he is subverting the Great American Game. Accusing him of being a *godless* communist, the Holy Rollers conduct noisy hymn sings at the stadium gates. And so the question of whether the Reds have the stuff it takes to win the pennant is quickly overshadowed by the question of whether they can survive the South long enough to show their stuff.

The Dixie Association goes down easy. Just as young Joan Didion copied

Nina Barrett is a writer who lives in New York City.

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passages out of Hemingway to internalize his style, one suspects that Donald Hays may have written his novel after an orgy of listening to John Prine records. Like Prine, he captures his characters' misfit, hobo qualities in neat, melodious paragraphs that are as self-contained as stanzas.

But the writing is sometimes overly neat. While Hays likes a dollop of eccentricity, perversity or misfortune in his characters, he prefers a tidy variety that can be summed up in a name—Hog or Lefty Marks, for instance—and balks at any emotional implications more complicated than simple poignancy. The best example of his emotional cuteness can be seen in Pansy Puckett, a former resident of a wayward women's home, one of three who stayed on after the home was converted into the Reds' residence. The other two work for the team (one as a player, the other as the bus driver), but Pansy, a "fallen cheerleader" who "looked like she'd had so many good times they'd started running into bad," seems to be there solely for Hog's benefit.

On his first night out of prison Hog seduces her, so wrapped up in his own four years of pent-up lust that he barely listens to her story of being raped as a teen-ager. "What I'd thought was going to be an easy piece," he tells us, "had turned out to be something else. I wasn't sure what yet, just knew that since the piece was still there, I'd still take it." But the rough edges of Pansy's experience are something neither Hog nor Hays seems able or inclined to explore further, and the reader waits in vain to learn anything much about her. Even at the novel's end, after Hog and Pansy have decided to get married, Hog is still too self-absorbed to listen to Pansy's stories. When she asks him why he's never been curious about what she was doing in a home for wayward women, he replies, "I was more concerned about my past than yours," and changes the subject.

It is tempting, at first, to dismiss Pansy as a silly, sexist characterization of the perfect one-night stand, but we discover that Hays intends her to fill a role for which the reader can only find her unqualified. Through the deepening feelings she inspires in Hog, he presumably learns the emotional lesson that enables him to stick it out rather than skip town:

> For a few hours of excitement and maybe a few weeks' worth of drinking and whoring money, I'd risked and done years during which nothing was ever new, not even the occasional sudden burst of pointless violence. But I'd never taken the big risk, I'd never committed myself to anything or any place or anybody for any length of time.

Here is a fiendishly macho twist to the love-'em-and-leave-'em scenario: Hog decides to stay and see it all through because "the big risk" lies in commitment. If the decision rings a bit hollow, it's because the reader can only feel that if it hadn't been Pansy, it could just as easily have been someone else.

Sticking it out is also the central issue in T. Coraghessan Boyle's *Budding Prospects*, whose narrator, Felix, introduces himself to us with the announcement, "I've always been a quitter." Felix's list of dumped commitments runs the gamut from the Boy Scouts to marriage. After rejecting life in the Establishment, Felix also chucked the counterculture, having learned that "the whole hippie ethic . . . had all been bullshit, a subterfuge to keep us from realizing that there were no jobs, the economy was in trouble, and the resources of the world going up in smoke."

But now Felix has wised up. What matters, he's figured out, is money. So when his strange but enterprising acquaintance, Vogelsang, offers him a chance to make a half-million dollars in just nine months, Felix jumps at it.

Vogelsang owns a secluded farm in the hills of Mendocino County. His friend, Boyd Dowst, who's just got his master's in botany, has worked out a scientific system for raising 2,000 marijuana plants. Vogelsang will provide the land, the capital and the connections; Dowst, the technical know-how; and Felix and friends, the physical labor. So, fantasizing about the camaraderie of roughing it in the wilderness, earning a lot of money without holding down jobs and spending that money on a life of luxury, Felix and friends head for the hills.

Budding Prospects turns out to be the degenerate, cynical version of the male escape fantasy, a sort of *Walden* for city slickers on Quaaludes. At its most successful, it spotlights all the pitfalls of that foolish optimism so integral to the adventure story. What if the wits you're going to rely on simply aren't sharp enough? What if you rely on your buddy and he turns out to be irresponsible or downright malicious? What about the fact that, even though you're the nice guy and he's the bastard, it's still the cop who's holding the gun and handcuffs?

When Felix and his buddies arrive at the farm, they find not the cozy cabin of their fantasies but "an extended shack, the yard strewn with refuse, the doorway gaping like an open mouth, like the hungry maw of the demon-god of abandoned houses demanding propitiation." Advised to steer clear of the locals, they can't quite resist Shirelle's Bum Steer, the local tavern. They alienate everyone they meet there and quickly blow their cover, which becomes a problem when the local police announce a crackdown on pot farmers. And Felix manages to make a particular enemy of the dumbest, meanest cop on the force.

Meanwhile, back on the farm, disaster after disaster befalls the project: three-quarters of the seeds refuse to sprout; a bear enjoys getting stoned on what does grow; the barn catches fire; several people threaten blackmail; the rainy season arrives early, threatening to destroy what meager harvest remains; Vogelsang turns out to be a double-crosser; and Boyd Dowst secures a teaching position that causes him to lose interest in the ailing crop.

Whereas Hog Durham grows tough, even witty, in the face of authority and adversity, Felix is nearly crippled by paranoia. Predictably, he considers quitting. Inexplicably, he decides to stick it out.

If Donald Hays seems to have studied under John Prine, Boyle marches to the erratic beat of Frank Zappa. While his satiric sense is sharp, his descriptive style is a chaotic jumble of melodramatic overstatements. For example, when Felix tells us that "suddenly the cabin began to tremble on its frame and a rumbling burst of sound threw me from my chair. Earthquake? Lightning bolt? The Russian invasion?" it turns out merely to be the neighbor riding by on a tractor, followed by his son on a moped. Standing in a field on a hot day, Felix tells us that "sweat coursed over my body—streams, rivulets, mighty deltas—the sun raked my face and thrust a clawing hand down my throat."

Such overwriting (those examples are representative, not isolated accidents) raises the question of what Boyle can possibly have in mind when he refers to this novel as a work of realism. At best, it makes his characters seem emotional-

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ly hard of hearing. At worst, Boyle's similes defy their presumably descriptive purpose. His overripe use of language is fatal to the novel, making it impossible for the reader to swallow its ironic denouement: Felix finally learns about commitment by sticking out an experience that is an unmitigated disaster from the first. By that point, we've become so used to Felix's distorted perceptions that we cannot believe he has the emotional acuity necessary to grow up.

As though he couldn't bear to let the story end on a note of total failure, Boyle tosses in a female character, Petra, for Felix to love. And although Felix's grace in romance is about equal to his skill as a farmer, we are asked to believe that she loves him too. There's some talk between them of commitment and babies, about which Felix doesn't seem too keen. Nevertheless, the novel ends with Felix, having acknowledged his failure at the farm, heading back for Petra and "time to think things over, break some new ground, and maybe even—if things went well—to plant a little seed." Felix seems to see this commitment as redemption; to the reader, it appears to be another adventure for which he is ill-equipped.

Conventionally, the American adventure story ends with the hero disappearing into the sunset with his best buddy or his horse. What is interesting about both *The Dixie Association* and *Budding Prospects* is that the heroes end by triumphantly embracing instead that old nemesis of the footloose American male: mild-mannered domestication and commitment to a woman.

But is this the "way toward maturity" or simply a plot device? In these books at least it seems to be the latter. There's enough lip service to feminism here to make it clear that neither Pansy nor Petra is out to trap her man; on the contrary, each clearly asserts that she's prepared to go her own way if things don't work out. The women share a high level of sexual enthusiasm accompanied by a convenient lack of emotional need. What these novelists have created is less a case for commitment than a male fantasy of it: the zipless commitment.

In the end, despite their brush with the social issues of the 1980s, our heroes ride off into yet another sunset, and gestures of commitment emerge as one more frontier for the adventure novel. □

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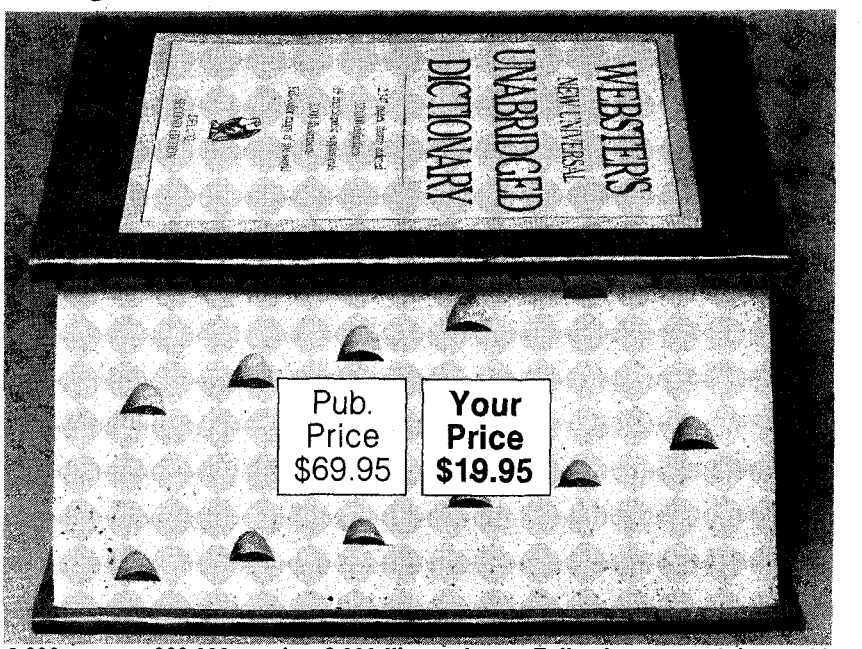

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Plea for the Defense

DAVID DICKSON

THE APOCALYPTICS: CANCER AND THE BIG LIE: How Environmental Politics Controls What We Know About Cancer. *By Edith Efron. Simon & Schuster. 590 pp. $19.95.*

In the fall of 1979, as the Carter Administration was preparing stringent regulations for the control of workplace carcinogens, the Synthetic Organic Chemical Manufacturers Association sent out a provocatively worded press release headlined "Research Concludes Industry Not Responsible for Today's Cancer Incidences, Scientist Reports." The release quoted from a speech given to members of the association by Harry B. Demopoulos, who was identified in it as an associate professor of pathology at the New York University Medical Center. Although Demopoulos conceded that inadvertent exposures to cancer-causing substances were potentially disastrous, he insisted that industry had the resources to prevent such calamities: "I feel industry should take the lead to regulate itself."

Edith Efron's *The Apocalyptics* carries essentially the same message. The book purports to be a militantly neutral report of facts; its principal "fact" is that the public has, for political reasons, been deliberately misled into believing exaggerated reports about the incidence and relative importance of industrially caused cancers. Efron bolsters her claims to neutrality by dressing up her story as a mixture of detective work and journalistic exposé (both descriptions are eagerly endorsed by the publishers on the book's dust jacket, which talks of "explosive disclosures of scientific misrepresentation" and "scandals at the highest levels of federal agencies"). In an attempt to disguise her partisanship Efron quotes few corporate leaders (even though many have expressed views virtually identical to hers) and dismisses industrial data on the grounds that they have "been largely discredited."

Yet what emerges, beneath all disclaimers, has a familiar ring. The American public, we are told, has been panicked into accepting excessive environmental and safety regulations on its industry. It has been told that a cancer epidemic exists when the evidence is highly ambiguous. And it has been led to distrust all forms of advanced technology just when enthusiastic support for such technology is needed to rescue U.S. capitalism.

Anyone who has followed the long and heated debates in Washington over regulation and regulatory reform will have heard such arguments a thousand times. The novelty of Efron's book lies less in its message than in its delivery. Joining a long line which stretches from Auguste Comte to Herbert Spencer to E.O. Wilson, she suggests that only science can offer an acceptable basis for political action. Yet the positivist tradition created a political program out of what it saw as the certainties of the scientific method, while Efron argues that political action is not acceptable *unless* a direct link can be demonstrated between a particular cause and a particular effect (which in the case of low levels of exposure to carcinogens is almost impossible).

Efron's argument is straightforward. During the 1960s and early 1970s, she contends, the American public, and its politicians, were hoodwinked by a small band of publicity-seeking scientists into believing that the world was rapidly poisoning itself. Those responsible for what she calls this "apocalyptic paradigm" included not only activist writers such as Rachel Carson, Barry Commoner, Paul Ehrlich and René Dubos but also a host of fellow travelers, among them former Harvard Dean Don K. Price and British Nobel laureate Peter Medawar—indeed, almost anyone who was prepared to go on record as supporting the need for political action to meet the world's growing environmental problems. The result was that "the scientifically-baseless assertion that man and the global ecosystem were in acute peril was rapidly converted into the conventional wisdom of the elite."

According to Efron, the strategy of those alarmists was designed not so much to protect the environment as to attack American industry. For this reason a gullible and unreflective mass media was employed to persuade the public that industry in general, and the chemical industry in particular, was responsible for a growing epidemic of cancer in America. As a consequence, Congress was persuaded to pass a series of laws such as the Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976, which requires stringent tests on new chemicals before they are introduced into the workplace. But, says Efron, since many of the dangers that such laws address were—and for the most part remain—speculative, the laws themselves are grounded in "moral" rather than "scientific" arguments. Hence the whole program around which the government's cancer-prevention strategy has been erected is little more than a house built on sand.

There is a certain amount of truth in these arguments. Many of those engaged in the environmental movement of the early 1970s had explicit political goals in mind, and they certainly identified industry as the prime culprit for pollution. The dangers of some chemicals were occasionally exaggerated by those who sought tighter controls, and certainly by those (relatively few) who spoke in terms of a cancer epidemic. For understandable reasons, debates about the need for new regulations have focused more on synthetic carcinogens than on natural ones. And, most important, in shifting from a strategy aimed at existing problems to one designed to prevent problems from arising, the government has inevitably based policy on speculation about what such problems might look like.

The central flaw in Efron's case—and it is a flaw that has become part of the dogma of much of American industry—is its confusion of the logics of scientific and political discourse. Recreating the crude categories of seventeenth-century philosophy, she insists that in the field of regulatory policy, social values (which she deprecatingly refers to as "moral abstractions") should remain subordinate to hard-nosed scientific facts. Yet however attractive that is as an ideal, it is a crude and misleading caricature of the way decisions are made in the real world; if the prevention of cancer is a legitimate public policy goal, then by definition political decisions will involve nonscientific judgments. As Douglas Costle, Carter's administrator for the Environmental Protection Agency put it, "Environmental regulation cannot wait for scientific certainty."

That logical flaw runs through every aspect of Efron's thesis. Take her discussion of the "no-threshold" hypothe-

David Dickson, formerly a correspondent for both Nature *and* Science, *is the author of* The New Politics of Science *(Pantheon).*

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regulatory purposes, that any level of exposure to a carcinogen, however small, should be treated as potentially dangerous. Government regulators have applied the no-threshold hypothesis on the principle that where detailed knowledge of dose-response relationships is absent, caution is to be preferred to recklessness. In Efron's analysis, the no-threshold hypothesis is renamed the no-threshold theory. Testing such a theory is virtually impossible, since it would require detailed knowledge of the mechanics of carcinogenesis which, if known, would guarantee its discoverer a Nobel Prize. Yet to Efron, the lack of proof discredits any intellectual claim that the "theory" might make.

Efron's refusal to distinguish between scientific and social reasoning—or, rather, her efforts to invalidate social reasoning as unscientific because it is based on moral choices—is best summed up by her concept of "regulatory science." The main thrust of Efron's argument here is that regulatory science—the set of assumptions about the links between man-made chemicals and human cancers which provides the conceptual framework for new regulations—is bad science. But nowhere does she address the question of whether her so-called regulatory science is, in fact, a science at all. If one accepts the distinction between scientific and political reasoning, then it is not, and regulation is essentially a social practice not to be judged according to the norms of laboratory techniques and scientific papers.

Efron's case is weakened further by her relentless interest in abstract analysis. There is no discussion of the specific controversies in which the complex mix of scientific and social judgments that make up regulatory decisions can be clearly seen. For instance, the heated debate within the scientific community over what constitutes safe exposure to low levels of radiation goes unremarked.

Indeed, any claim *The Apocalyptics* might make to political neutrality evaporates when one consults its index and discovers that almost all the government administrators under attack were officeholders in the Carter Administration. Conversely, virtually no mention is made of their successors, Reagan appointees who, while they no doubt share many of Efron's criticisms of past practices, must still reject her notion that scientific data can substitute for political decisions.

There is an important issue here trying to get out. Efron is correct to claim that policies for regulating the social impact of modern technology, and, in particular, its cancer-causing effects, reflect political choices. And she is correct to stress that those choices reach the heart of discussions that outwardly appear scientific. But nothing in her discussion warrants the conclusion that we are therefore faced with a choice between science (good) and politics (bad). Her case is presented as a detective story in which the villain is a group of government scientists and their university-based allies seeking to increase their power and prestige by protecting citizens against a nonexistent threat, namely industrially caused cancer. It would be fairer to describe the book as a comprehensive but selective reading of events that ultimately argues for limiting the government's control of the private sector and supports rescinding the rules designed to insure a cleaner environment and safer workplaces. □

DANCE.

MINDY ALOFF

Brahms/Handel, the new Jerome Robbins/Twyla Tharp collaboration for the New York City Ballet, presents its dancers in cerebral and double-edged ways; sometimes the wit is so clinical it's almost cruel. Still, each time one watches it, there is more to see in its extravagant marriage of impulse and complexity. Since its first performances at the State Theater in June, the piece has become an audience favorite, and at a mid-July gala in the Saratoga Performing Arts Center (City Ballet's summer home), patrons cheered longer for it than they did for several Balanchine masterpieces.

Brahms/Handel offers virtuoso passages of classic dancing; a couple of solos for Merrill Ashley and Ib Andersen have been crafted with special refinement. Yet its distinctive images—somersaults, flips, dives, exalted lifts—are acrobatic. The general look of the dance is urgent: the climaxes are positively headlong, and when they occur you can just about smell sawdust in the air. The moments you're likely to remember are those in which the girls get swept off their feet, so there's a giddy streak of romance in the fun too. And because the awkwardness and effort of the lifts are allowed to show, the romance seems self-conscious and foolishly young. We could be at one of Jay Gatsby's summer bashes, and although allusions to Balanchine's *oeuvre* decorate the action, his sensibility is completely absent.

Brahms/Handel takes its name from the music, an arrangement of Brahms's "Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel" for solo piano. The orchestration by Edmund Rubbra has a colorful personality of its own. It does more than enlarge the musical scale or transpose a concert-hall style to a theatrical one; it also provides a point of view about the dramatic contours of the score. The emotion it dictates is not necessarily Brahms's alone, which may have freed Tharp and Robbins from any compulsion to represent a nineteenth-century mood. (In a City Ballet season that saw the long-awaited revival of Balanchine's Brahms masterpiece, *Liebeslieder Walzer*—a ballet faithful to the composer in manner and design—*Brahms/Handel* represents a declaration of independence from both Balanchine and Brahms.)

The Robbins/Tharp partnership seems to have been one of friendly competition. There is a gang of dancers in aqua, led by Ashley and Andersen, and a gang in emerald, led by Maria Calegari and Bart Cook. (The blowsy costumes are by Oscar de la Renta.) Rumor has it that Robbins made the choreography for the blues and Tharp for the greens, and the styles of dancing reflect that: the blues use the stage as a space for achitecture, the greens treat it as an arena for the play of dynamic forces. However, there are sections where the counterpoint for figures within the same group has a combative edge, suggesting more complicated lines of authorship.

A number of critics have pointed out how happy the cast looks while performing the ballet. They do smile, but in the deep space behind the principals, the grins of the corps sometimes seem like teeth bared in rage. Without having watched the ballet from the audience, a dancer in it would need a powerful imagination to infer the objective charm of the stage pictures from the subjective experience of creating them. That is especially the case for the greens, whose women are lifted off the stage as much as they dance on it, and whose men are oddly unprepossessing. A corps of male dancers rushing around like firemen to catch a ballerina as she drops in free fall or soloists who must come out of a lift with their rear ends to the audience won't readily guess how the shambling runs register as monumental energy from the front of the house or how a

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movement that's uncomfortable to execute can shock an onlooker into affection. Although Balanchine's *Episodes*, also revived this season, appears to have supplied *Brahms/Handel* with its eccentric angles, Balanchine's gift for making dances that appeal to dancers as much as audiences may remain unique. The closest *Brahms/Handel* comes to it is in the choreography for Ashley, who appears genuinely happy with her allegro solos. She radiantly carries out the most picayune detail of her assignment and seems to grow younger as the pace quickens.

Robbins hasn't made anything this disciplined or attractive in years. Nor, in her recent balletic pieces outside the dances for Baryshnikov, has Tharp introduced such grand, fearless imagery as that of Calegari's entrance, a kind of cortege over which the principal is hoisted like a flag. I'm curious to see Tharp and Robbins try another joint project. Theirs may become an all-American partnership with a 1980s twist. He gives her room; she gives him pulse.

One of the least convincing moments in the eight-hour program by Pina Bausch that the Wuppertaler Tanztheater brought to the Brooklyn Academy of Music in June occurred during her setting of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* (1976). Backs to the audience, women are clumped in an upstage corner. They perform a relay: one by one, each is tapped on the back by a sister and handed a red dress. She runs with the garment to the center of the stage, performs an inscrutable gesture, then runs back to tap the next woman. The conceit seems to be that each member of the tribe is the instrument of her neighbor's doom. Had the cast seriously played the game, really waiting until the last minute before turning around, it might have had a primitive power. But they didn't. By the time one woman was nearly back with the group, the next would already be turned to face her, a hand extended. The lack of alertness made the dancers look weak and driven. Call it anti-drama, exhaustion or overrehearsal, this looseness occurred throughout the four Bausch works I saw.

Such slackness of timing made any sort of suspense, or theater, impossible. For me, the worst thing about this company wasn't what the dancers did—throwing themselves at one another or at the leaf- or soil- or sod-covered stage with wearying repetition—but the indulgent attitude toward rhythm. It was no coincidence that the most loudly applauded moment of the four-hour *1980* was a nearly still tableau in which half-dressed sunbathers crisply rearrange their limbs on certain notes of Judy Garland's "Over the Rainbow." The sure correlation between the minimal movement and the music made for a scene whose irony we could understand.

Pina Bausch has been called a feminist; hers is not a feminism I understand. Her women often have the upper hand, but because their world permits them no way to change anyone's behavior or motivation, they are not in true positions of power. In fact, the idea of significant change is so distant from Bausch's work that one wonders why she doesn't go in more for *tableaux vivants* to express her vision of a world lacking will. Nothing in her *Bluebeard*, for example, was more affecting than the moment when women in pale slips materialized from nowhere and suddenly, as if blown aloft, were seen clinging silently to the grimy walls. And nothing in *1980* is more interesting to look at than the silent stage blanketed in grass with the house lights on full, inhabited only by a model deer. Since *1980* (the best and most recent work I saw) is made up of unstressed diversions that trick the audience into focusing on one act while the "real" performance happens elsewhere, one wonders whether Bausch may, in fact, be working toward a theater of loose changes between unstressed episodes.

Bausch's expressionism uses themes of abuse and abasement that go back at least to Oskar Kokoschka's 1907 play, *Murderer, the Hope of Women*, and some people I know responded with empathy. To those friends, who would never countenance writing as slack as the movement and stage business the Wuppertaler brought to Brooklyn, I commend *Circus Scene*, a mime piece written by Bertolt Brecht during the 1940s for the German-born clown Lotte Goslar. *Circus Scene* is currently in the repertory of Goslar's touring Pantomime Circus, which played New York City at the Joyce Theater this spring. The piece has all the elements of Bausch's vision: unjust victimization, grotesque obsession with anguish, humor at the expense of the protagonist, a belittling of the body. But it also tells an anecdote with stinging clarity. Here is the heart of the matter: either the clown or the lion is going to be eaten. Not subtle, but theater worthy of the name. □

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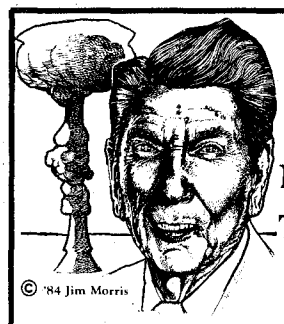

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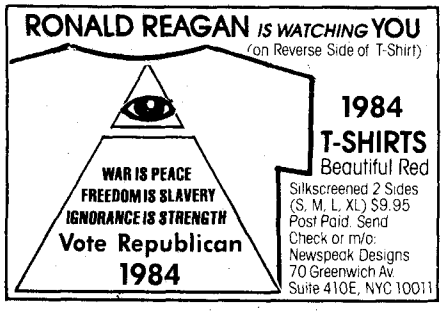

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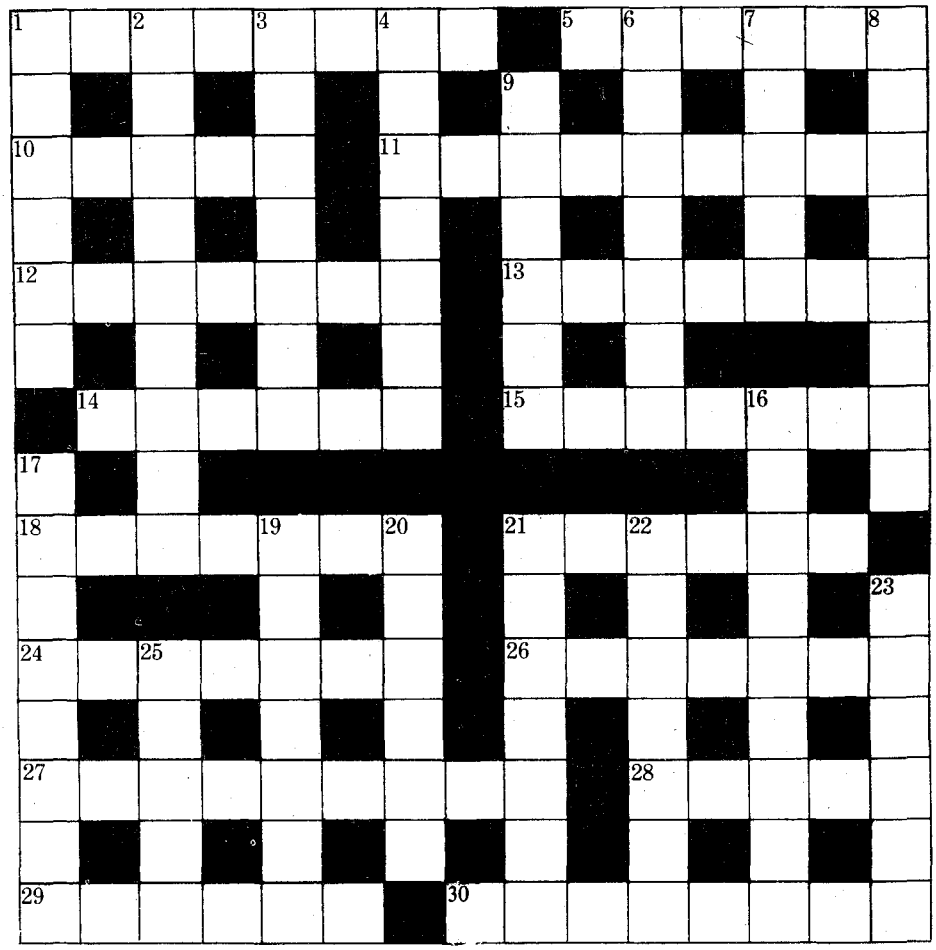
SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 2019

■	I	N	S	T	E	P	■	P	A	S	S	A	G	E
D	■	O	■	A	■	A	■	A	■	E	■	L	■	S
O	U	T	O	F	S	T	E	P	■	Q	U	I	L	T
U	■	E	■	F	■	C	■	E	■	U	■	M	■	A
B	E	S	E	E	C	H	■	R	A	I	M	E	N	T
L	■	■	■	T	■	W	■	■	■	N	■	N	■	E
E	X	T	R	A	■	O	P	P	O	S	I	T	E	S
■	■	R	■	■	■	R	■	A	■	■	■	A	■	■
S	E	A	S	N	A	K	E	S	■	S	E	L	L	S
P	■	N	■	C	■	■	■	S	■	E	■	■	■	P
A	S	S	U	M	E	D	■	P	I	N	T	A	I	L
N	■	P	■	I	■	I	■	O	■	S	■	S	■	A
G	R	O	W	N	■	V	E	R	B	O	S	I	T	Y
L	■	R	■	E	■	O	■	T	■	R	■	A	■	S
E	N	T	R	E	A	T	■	S	A	Y	I	N	G	■

Crossword Puzzle No. 2020

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 Recklessly desire just this combination? (8)
5 The head in a ship causes floods, perhaps. (6)
10 A finer mixture, as one might surmise. (5)
11 This might keep things level 13, for example. (9)
12 Some people might appreciate this for a cut, if bad. (3,4)
13 See 17 down
14 They say you're not all there being off yours. (JFK's was well known.) (6)
15 It rocks and it reels—clean out of it! (7)
18 The loss may not be obvious with such accommodations. (7)
21 Poorly thought of, if materially like this? (6)
24 In the tenth, rallies like this to show how to capture the audience. (7)
26 I had a little one in the child's song, bearing fruit, of a sort. (3,4)
27 May take some pluck, but the old man's in bad shape! (9)
28 Grows together, but returns in bad odor. (5)
29 One's so upset by them when at the end of one's rope! (6)
30 One might go over this as a source, having a method. (8)

DOWN

1 Being very loud, sort of wish around it—one of them might be just a puff of smoke! (6)
2 For use in a sort of villainous description? (9)
3 One might get a row of things from it. (7)
4 It might replace a match of what would be much less than heavyweights. (7)
6 Father's pretty smart, by the way! (7)
7 See 22
8 It's only a wee step, though a trifle shaky, to get in the garden. (5,3)
9 A lot of these on the beach in the sand, in rags, in tatters! (6)
16 The sort of wit I never expected to be found on television. (9)
17 and 13 across Not Wynken, Blynken and Nod, having grown up. (5,3,2,1,4)
19 An English nobleman gets the O.B.E.—a pendant might go on it. (7)
20 My gal, by way of the plant? (6)
21 Can't, as a shuffle, make the game better? (7)
22, 7 and 25 Evidently one can't take a certain step alone. (2,5,3,2,5)
23 One might find the first person a foxy, little and spotty combination. (6)
25 See 22

SEE LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION AT LEFT

PUZZLERS' PARTY

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